THE Nation.

MIXING IT UP

ELECTION '08: THE EDITORS
ARI MELBER on the netroots
JOHN NICHOLS on McCain's surge
PATRICIA J. WILLIAMS on the media, sex and race
CHRISTOPHER HAYES on populism's future

JANUARY 28, 2008
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Letters

Oprah & Obama: Ouch

Anniston, Ala.
I was surprised by the restraint in Patricia J. Williams's explanations for why America feels there's something not quite fair about Oprah endorsing Obama ["Diary of a Mad Law Professor," Dec. 24]. She almost identifies the more insidious motivation when she suggests we're uncomfortable with Oprah getting political. But it's not just about her getting political; it's whom she's getting political with. Williams suggests that part of the appeal of the "double O's" is that we trust them. I would submit that half of the attraction is that we flatter ourselves by believing they would trust and like us in return. That illusion is shattered for a huge portion of Oprah's audience because by endorsing Obama she has revealed the obvious, the barrier that they're afraid would keep her from being their friend: she's black. These folks feel betrayed because she is very publicly reminding them of something they've been working very hard to forget.
Rebecca Littlejohn

Harlem, N.Y.
As a black man, I have so longed to have Obama be the real deal. But, alas, he ain't. His signal of support for the Violent Radicalization and Homegrown Terrorism bill, *aka* the Thought Crimes bill or the Police State bill, shattered my illusions. My "black" candidate is Dennis Kucinich.
Mario Budha

Corinth, Tex.
I am perhaps one of the few African-Americans who is not a fan of Oprah or Obama. Nevertheless, I was captivated by this column. Patricia Williams, you represent well.
Michael Morris

Ron & Gorb: Beyond the Freeze?

Gardiner, N.Y.
Jonathan Schell is one of my heroes, but he joins aging cold war hawks in attempting to rewrite history ["The Old and New Shapes of Nuclear Danger," Dec. 24]. Reagan's legacy should be viewed in terms of what he did during his eight years rather than by selectively recounting his abolitionist rhetoric.

Reagan pushed for the MX missile system. But Congress, empowered by the nuclear freeze movement, defeated it—reputedly the first major presidentially sponsored weapons system ever to fail to win funding. The military contractors were in shock. SDI was the stepchild of this defeat. It was sold to the public as a shield against Soviet attack; the universal ridicule by scientists was muffled by promises of hefty R&D grants. It was a harebrained scheme with only one purpose: maintaining the flow of public money to the military corporations Reagan viewed as his primary constituency.

Sharing SDI technology with the Soviets was always patently absurd—how could Reagan make promises on behalf of some future administration? When had the United States ever shared vital defense technology with an adversary? The USSR could never afford to build it anyway!

Were Gorbachev to permit America's development of SDI with massive reductions of missiles on both sides, a point would be reached when the United States retained reduced but still devastating first-strike capability, shielded from an equally reduced Soviet retaliation. No Soviet leader could agree to such a plan.

Reagan's true Reykjavik legacy is as a President who sabotaged nuclear abolition at the one brief moment when abolition might have been possible. And he apparently did so because of a pet pork-barrel project he had neither the courage nor the conviction nor the vision to let go of.
Marc B. Fried

Schell Replies

New York City
There is a great deal of truth in what Marc Fried has to say. Reagan did tirelessly seek to deploy the useless and dangerously destabilizing MX missile, only

(continued on page 24)

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The Race Is On

The first lesson to take from the Iowa caucus and New Hampshire primary is to throw the pundits, pollsters and kingmakers out the window. Armed with smug self-certainty and the slippery intelligence of numbers, they tried to declare the race for President over even before it began. First Hillary Clinton was crowned with the laurel of inevitability. Then, in the wake of Barack Obama's impressive win in Iowa—where he outpolled his rivals among Democrats, Republicans and independents, men and women, blacks and whites, and across nearly all income levels—they flipped the script. Obama became the invincible "change" candidate, and Clinton was advised to drop out of the race so that she might, one day, enjoy the consolation prize of Senate majority leader. John Edwards's second-place finish in Iowa, as well as his message of economic populism, were virtually ignored by the press, lost in the media storm around "change," Clinton's "tears" and a projected ten- to fourteen-point slam-dunk for Obama in New Hampshire. But Clinton won that state's primary with a surge of women voters and strong late support from the traditional Democratic base.

EDITORIAL

The race for the Democratic nomination is on—and it will be decided not by trigger-happy pundits but by the voters themselves, who clearly see this as a watershed moment and are turning out in record numbers. There is still a path to victory for Obama, but as New Hampshire's results show, he can't prevail merely by appealing to new voters and independents. He needs to rally women, union members and the working and middle classes—i.e., the party's traditional base. And he needs to expand that base, reaching out to the disempowered and dispossessed to fulfill the greatest promise of his campaign, which still holds the potential to forge a new Democratic majority. As he assembles this broad and disparate coalition, some key questions arise for progressives. Whose concerns will take center stage in his campaign and—if it is successful—in his presidency? What is the substance of the change he promises? And what is the meaning of his postpartisan talk? Will he take on—aggressively and concretely—the conservative ideology and corporate power that are the main impediments to a progressive agenda?

Next up is Nevada, home to 145,000 union members and a rapidly growing Latino population. Carried by George W. Bush in 2000 and 2004, Nevada will be an important test of Obama's ability to build a new coalition. He's already sounding the themes that are likely to resonate: in his concession speech in Manchester, Obama echoed Edwards's populist language, talking about how textile workers in Spartanburg, dishwashers in Las Vegas and little boys and girls in Dillon and Los Angeles share common interests. The coveted endorsement of the Las Vegas Culinary Union will help him, but he still needs to follow his words with bold policy proposals. Clinton, for her part, has also picked up Edwards's populist themes (see "Populism's Candidate," page 6), as well as her share of union support.

Then the campaign trail turns to South Carolina, where African-Americans are 30 percent of the population. The contest for their backing between Clinton and Obama is shaping up to be a fierce one. The Democratic primary so far has been conducted on a fairly high level. Let's hope that in the season to come, the candidates clarify and sharpen their policy differences rather than muddy the waters with negative personal attacks. With no exit in sight in Iraq, and as the country reels from the pain of home foreclosures and rising unemployment, there is simply too much at stake.

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NEWS & ANALYSIS

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Katrina vanden Heuvel: Reading the Signs in New Hampshire

John Nichols: Obama's Perplexing Loss

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Campaign in the City

NATION POLL

Which GOP contender is the greatest threat?

AROUND THE NATION

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GOP Dilemmas

The Republican Party—as recently as two years ago the dominant political force on the planet—is a divided and dysfunctional remnant of its former self. So the party is desperately searching for a man on a white horse who will rally the troops and defend the presidency, the last redoubt of its former fortunes. In Iowa and New Hampshire, where Republicans dominated competitive caucuses and primaries as recently as 2000, enthusiasm about the Democratic presidential contest far outstripped that for the GOP fight. And those who did choose to caucus and vote as Republicans took the party in radically different directions. Iowa Republicans gave a caucus win to the champion of their party's evangelical wing, while New Hampshire Republicans opted for a heretic tentatively invited back into the fold because of a creeping sense on the part of mainstream Republicans and their independent allies that he alone might hold the fort against the tide of Obama-mania or resurgent Clintonism. While Mike Huckabee's Baptist-with-a-guitar candidacy is unlikely to secure him the nomination of a party led by cynics who see the faithful as prospective voters rather than prospective candidates, John McCain's outsider status has suddenly become his most appealing characteristic for Republicans who are starting to recognize that Americans do not approve of what their party has become.

COMMENT

McCain's renewal as a serious contender holds out the prospect that if Republicans can swallow their ideologies and accept him, the party might yet hold its own, especially if the fall race is focused on national security issues, which are the Vietnam POW's forte. Even though McCain's stands on most issues are those of a committed conservative, and even though on foreign policy he often out-neocons the neocons, his maverick stances on campaign finance reform, global warming and immigration keep him at odds with a Republican base that has been told again and again by talk-radio personalities that the Arizona senator cannot be trusted.

The GOP establishment's discomfort with McCain actually helped him in New Hampshire. It made him credible with independents and caused even Republican stalwarts to think that, whether the party must compete in the fall against the newly emotional campaign of Hillary Clinton or what Bill Clinton dismissed as the "fairy tale" candidacy of Barack Obama, the best GOP bet might be a "senior statesman." That's McCain's fundamental appeal to Republicans who are justifiably shaken not just by the failures of George W. Bush's presidency and their party's faltering poll numbers but by the fact that in Iowa and New Hampshire, independents and a surprising number of Republicans caucused and voted as Democrats.

Republican leaders and the grassroots faithful would prefer another candidate to McCain. But, to paraphrase Donald Rumsfeld, you campaign with the candidates you've got. And the other GOP contenders inspire even less confidence than McCain among the more enlightened faithful. Romney has been on both sides of "core values" issues like abortion rights, gay rights and immigration. Giuliani, by skipping first caucus

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and primary states, lost an opportunity to prove he could appeal to base voters despite their disdain for his stances on social issues. Huckabee, who appealed to the base in Iowa as a "Christian leader" but then tried to run in more secular New Hampshire as just a "leader," terrifies GOP donors and strategists, who fear he'll be a Barry Goldwater–style disaster in November. Thompson's campaign has confirmed that the actor who wanted to play the role of Reagan is not ready for prime time. But the challenge runs deeper than personalities; it reflects the fact that the party has no candidate who can easily maintain its unnatural coalition of home-schooling fundamentalists, anti-tax suburbanites, gun-owning libertarians, sherry-sipping neocons and the business elite.

Listening to conservative talk-radio as the New Hampshire primary approached offered a reminder that, as conservative commentator Laura Ingraham admits, "There's a real debate within the Republican Party about what conservatism means in the twenty-first century." On the eve of the primary, Rush Limbaugh was lambasted by callers for being too tough on Huckabee, for neglecting Ron Paul's libertarian and antiwar candidacy, and for failing to recognize the fundamental flaws of Romney and other contenders the conservative commissars prefer to McCain.

The commissars may yet win. Romney has plenty of his own money to carry on, and if the divisions run deep enough in the early caucus and primary states, Giuliani's late-stage strategy could prevail. But Democratic strategist Bob Beckel was not spinning when he said, "McCain is the one person [Democrats] fear more than anybody else." As Beckel notes, "McCain could make a little bit of the reform argument himself, and he's got the national security issues."

McCain is old and edgy. That's his strength; it makes him just enough of an outsider to keep Republicans competitive in a "change" election. It's the argument he'll be delivering in Michigan, South Carolina, Florida and other states where the GOP's difficult debate about what conservatism means—and how competitive the party wants to be in November—will play out as it struggles to nominate a replacement for the least-popular President in modern American history.

JOHN NICHOLS

Noted.

MILLION MORTGAGE MARCH: On January 6, the opening day of the Rainbow/PUSH Coalition's **Wall Street Project Economic Summit**, much of the talk was on the subprime mortgage implosion and its impact on the economy, now barreling toward a recession. "The subprime crisis is sinking America's economic ship like the Titanic," warned the Rev. **Jesse Jackson** before a battery of local politicians, housing activists and civil rights leaders. Black homeowners have been hit particularly hard, largely because predatory lenders have been steering them toward subprime loans for years at more than twice the rate of white homeowners, even when they could afford prime rates. According to the **Urban League**, home equity accounts for almost 90 percent of black homeowners' net worth. So as the housing market collapses, much of the new wealth that has accumulated in black communities in recent decades will go with it.

"It's the single largest economic issue of our time," said Jackson, "a crime committed on Wall Street, made possible by the complicity of the US government." On January 22 Rainbow/PUSH and the Urban League will lead a march on the Department of Housing and Urban Development in Washington to bring attention to the foreclosure crisis and force President Bush to confront the issue during his State of the Union address.

MAX FRASER

WE'RE NOT THERE: Ask anyone in the know—the only reasons to attend the **Golden Globe Awards** are the food and the after-parties. But now the gala is the latest casualty of the **Writers' Guild** strike. As first reported by **Nikki Finke**'s influential blog Deadline Hollywood, NBC and the **Hollywood Foreign Press Association** are opting for a no-frills press conference announcing the winners, preceded by a few hours of interviews and movie clips. The network had originally planned to cover the post-awards party circuit, but HBO, *InStyle*/Warner Bros. and Universal have canceled their events. NBC's decision not to nix the show altogether is a clear compromise. The *Daily News* asserts that once the WGA "convinced all the star nominees not to show up, the only live 'show' NBC had left looked to be an empty podium and several dozen statuettes with tags reading 'Ship To.'" Instead, the network will offer up a truly absurd facsimile of a ceremony that had little cachet to begin with. But with the studios' precious (and profitable) **Oscar** night just over a month away, the WGA's message is clear: the pressure is on.

AKIVA GOTTLIEB

CASUALTIES OF WAR: Spc. **Noah Charles Pierce** of Virginia, Minnesota, was a 23-year-old Army veteran who served two tours, including combat duty in Iraq. But last year, crippled with post-traumatic stress disorder, he left the military. He committed suicide in July. His story—like those of thousands of other combat veterans who have committed suicide in recent years—might have ended there. So a salute for courage and vision goes to the leaders of the newly established **AMVETS Post 33** in Specialist Pierce's hometown for naming the post in his honor. "As far as I'm concerned, Noah died of injuries received in combat," says post commander **Shawn Carr**.

Suicide has been a silent byproduct of the "war on terror." In November CBS News reviewed data from all fifty states and found what can only be called an epidemic: in 2005 there were at least 6,256 suicides among those who served in the armed forces. And vets Pierce's age are hit the hardest: veterans age 20 to 24—all of whom joined and served during the "war on terror"—had the highest suicide rate, between two and four times higher than civilians the same age. The simple gesture of naming a post in Pierce's honor also reflects a new willingness to discuss one of the most censored subjects in history: the psychological consequences of war.

BRUCE SHAPIRO

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Populism's Candidate

Berlin, New Hampshire

This mill town of 10,000 people lies about ten miles from the Maine border. For more than a hundred years its sole economic engine was the paper mill that sits on the Androscoggin River; but like the other paper mill towns in the area, it's been brought low by the sledgehammer of creative destruction. In 2006 the owners closed the mill and laid off its 250 workers, and last year they detonated three of the four smokestacks. You can watch them die on YouTube, pitching over in slow motion like trees falling under the ax.

COMMENT

At 2 AM on the Monday before the New Hampshire primary, about two dozen John Edwards supporters stood outside a fire station in downtown Berlin awaiting the arrival of the candidate and his wife as they crisscrossed the state in a final thirty-six-hour push. Murray Rogers, president of the Steelworkers local in the area, was one of those who came out in the middle of the night to greet the Edwardses, holding a sign and flanked by two of his fellow union members. After working for thirty-six years in the Wausau paper mill, one town over in Groveton, he lost his job along with 300 others when it was closed December 31. Edwards's people "were the first ones there," Rogers told me as we stood outside the firehouse. "They offered to come and help us. He wrote a letter to the CEO because of the poor severance package they gave us, on our behalf. None of the others even offered to come. It's a pretty strong message to us who cares and who doesn't."

The triumph of global capital and crony capitalism over the past several decades has created a country of Silicon Valleys and Berlins, SoHo lofts and storm-ravaged Lower Ninth Ward bungalows. The last time Edwards ran for President, he called this the "Two Americas" and promised to stitch them together. But from the day Edwards announced this campaign in the Lower Ninth, he has presented himself as a warrior for one of those Americas as it fights to wrest back some of the ill-gotten gains from the other one—the "moneyed interests" and "entrenched corporate power" that have a "stranglehold on our democracy."

This populism makes the establishment media uncomfortable: consummate Beltway pundit Stuart Rothenberg recently worried in a column that the stock market would tank the day after Edwards was elected. When the *Des Moines Register* endorsed Hillary Clinton, it chided the 2008 populist incarnation of Edwards for his "harsh anti-corporate rhetoric." But "harsh" pretty accurately sums up the country's judgment of the past seven years. In New Hampshire exit polls, two-thirds of Democrats and half of Republican voters said they were "angry" with the Bush Administration. The economy was the top issue in both parties, with nine out of ten voters expressing anxiety about it. All of which should redound to Edwards's benefit. The coalition envisioned by his campaign would stack different classes atop one another until the sum towered over a conservative minority of plutocrats. It would bring together the urban poor, the working poor in far-flung exurbs, the white working class in shuttered mill towns and the deeply anxious college-educated middle class. But it has been unable to put such a coalition together. When election day had come and gone, Edwards managed only 23 percent even on the favorable terrain of Berlin; Hillary Clinton won the town easily with 50 percent of the vote.

Edwards and his campaign point out that they've been fighting uphill: out-fundraised and outspent in Iowa six to one (probably closer to three to one, when independent 527 expenditures are figured in) and constantly contending with a press corps that, in the words of one Edwards staffer, "has never found a place for us in their story." These disadvantages are compounded by the shortcomings of Edwards's message. He almost never, unprompted, says a word about foreign policy; his pugilism can get the better of him (as when he took a cheap, sexist shot at Clinton for tearing up); and his stump speech, sharp and focused and righteous as it may be, is also so full of pathos it prompted something close to muted despair in me every time I heard it. Watching Nataline Sarkisyan's family give a raw, emotional account of their daughter's death in a hospital after Cigna waited too long to approve a liver transplant, I felt like someone had driven a railroad spike through my sternum. I couldn't imagine calling voters or knocking on doors or even going to polls. And I don't think it was just me. Unlike at Obama and Clinton rallies, where the crowds cheer at the slightest provocation, during most of Edwards's stump speech you can hear a pin drop. It's a bit like attending a funeral for the American dream.

New Hampshire proved that writing off campaigns or predicting outcomes is a mug's game. But no matter who wins the Democratic nomination, the fact remains that the Edwards campaign has set the domestic policy agenda for the entire field. He was the first with a bold universal healthcare plan, the first with an ambitious climate change proposal that called for cap-and-trade, and the leader on reforming predatory lending practices and raising the minimum wage to a level where it regains its lost purchasing power. Edwards's rhetoric has started to bleed into his rivals' speeches as well. "Too many have been invisible for too long," Clinton said in her victory speech Tuesday night. "Well, you are not invisible to me. The oil companies, the drug companies, the health insurance companies, the predatory student loan companies have had seven years of a President who stands up for them. It's time we had a President who stands up for all of you."

Edwards maintains that he's not going anywhere, saying that

Calvin Trillin, Deadline Poet

A Lame Duck President During the Presidential Primaries

The talk's of change, of promise that
We'll see a new day dawn.
And there sits Bush, irrelevant—
Forgotten but not gone.

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fighting corporate power on behalf of working people is the "cause of my life." Senior campaign adviser Joe Trippi stresses that the campaign is lean enough that it can continue through the convention, picking up delegates along the way, but the endgame for that strategy is unclear. Ultimately, though, the Edwards campaign has been both a campaign and a cause, with the latter outperforming the former. Few remember that the signature economic policy of Bill Clinton's presidency, balancing the budget, originated as a plank in the platform of his primary rival Paul Tsongas. If the next Democratic President manages to pass universal healthcare or a carbon cap-and-trade, we'll owe the Edwards campaign a significant debt.

CHRISTOPHER HAYES

Kenya's Crisis

COMMENT

Imagine that George W. Bush had himself sworn in on day three of the 2000 Florida recount in a White House ceremony so hastily thrown together they forgot to play the national anthem. Then imagine he declared an immediate ban on any further political rallies or live television broadcasts contesting his coronation. This scene should give Americans an approximation of what has happened in Kenya since December 29 and a sense of why the situation is so explosive. The roots of violence and chaos lie not in tribalism but in a bold power grab by a tight clique around the president.

Opposition leader Raila Odinga, candidate of the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), clearly ran ahead in all major polls leading up to the election. According to figures published on an official government website, he won four of Kenya's eight regions outright and ran a dead heat in two others. President Mwai Kibaki led in only two: his stronghold Central Province and the Eastern Province. One by one, officials have broken down and recanted their certification of the election results, and the attorney general has promised an inquiry. The EU, France and now the United States have declared the vote rigged.

Hardliners in the government have apparently decided that if they can polarize the country enough, the opposition coalition around Odinga will splinter and Kenyans will be left with a bare-knuckled brawl between the Gikuyu and Luo tribes (with perhaps another fight brewing between Gikuyus and Kalenjins). They seem prepared to weather this tragic outcome, since they know that they have always prevailed in the past in this kind of ethnic one-on-one. In a further sign of intransigence, Kibaki has now named his Cabinet, in defiance of the expectation that ministers be sitting members of Parliament, which has not yet convened. The "losers," if the hardliners get their way, will be the Kenyan people, whose hopes for democracy and a rising standard of living now lie in tatters as many flee for their lives, abandoning homes and livelihoods. Brave Kenyans and their international allies, such as those working with the NGO Common Hope for Health in the western region of the country, are delivering aid across ethnic lines, at the risk of their lives and in hopes of calming tensions. But Kenya cannot move forward without a political solution that pushes the hardliners aside.

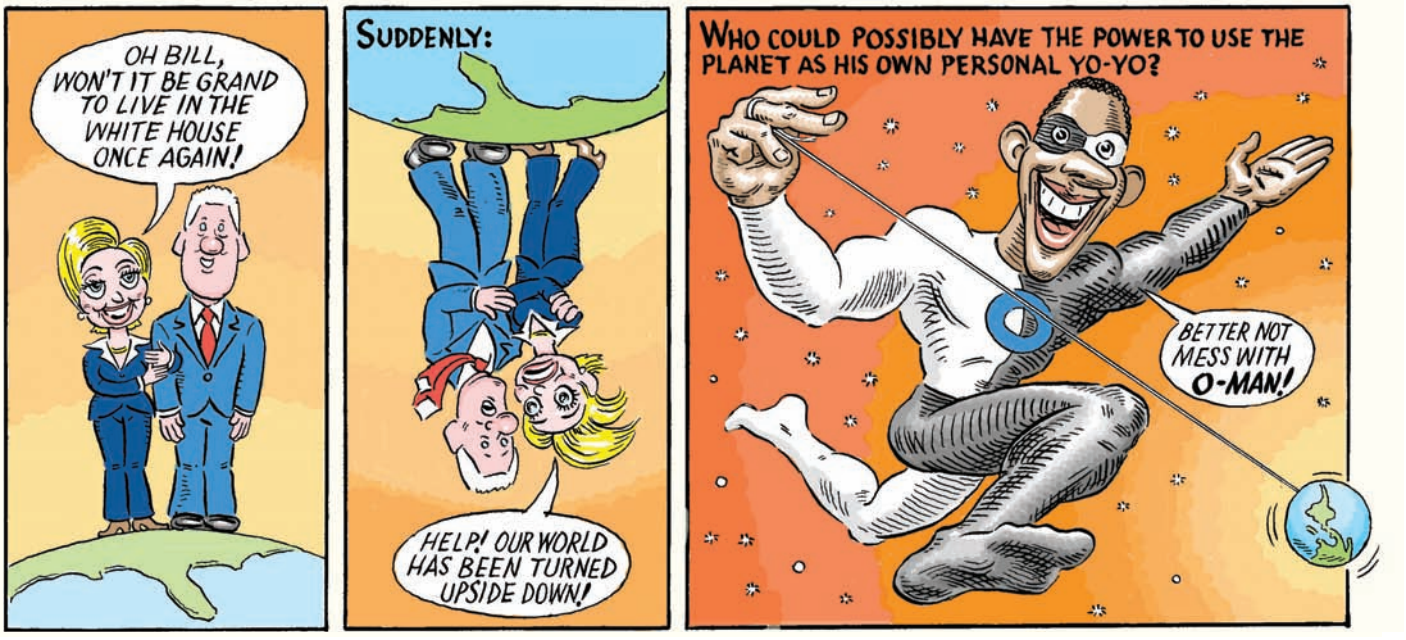
The Western penchant for "disaster porn" coverage doesn't shed much light on the situation, as horrifying images of mayhem and murder inevitably have led to ill-informed speculations regarding long-suppressed hatreds boiling to the surface. CNN, for example, described the crisis as taking shape between "majority" and "minority" tribes. In fact, Kenya is a polyglot nation of more than thirty ethnicities, none of which are a demographic majority. Tribal violence is an effect of the crisis provoked by the rigged election, not its cause.

The way to end the violence is to demand a speedy return to full democracy, transparency and accountability. This should

Comix Nation

OOPS!

by ROBERT GROSSMAN


OH BILL, WON'T IT BE GRAND TO LIVE IN THE WHITE HOUSE ONCE AGAIN!
SUDDENLY:
HELP! OUR WORLD HAS BEEN TURNED UPSIDE DOWN!
WHO COULD POSSIBLY HAVE THE POWER TO USE THE PLANET AS HIS OWN PERSONAL YO-YO?
BETTER NOT MESS WITH O-MAN!

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include, at a minimum, some interim power-sharing beyond the fig leaf of "national unity," and new presidential elections, conducted under auspices other than those of the now-discredited Electoral Commission. Key voices in civil society, such as the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights, the Law Society of Kenya and the clergy, are struggling to remind Kenyans that this breakdown need not be permanent.

Kenyans once looked to Kibaki as a deliverer. In the 2002 elections, he carried Odinga's stronghold province of Nyanza by the same commanding majority Odinga enjoyed this time around. Ironically, Odinga helped bring Kibaki to power by brokering a coalition of regional leaders to unseat longtime Kenyan strongman Daniel arap Moi. Kibaki, however, chose to abandon the coalition that put him in the presidency and to take advantage of the very executive powers he had vowed to curtail. (Full disclosure: my uncle was part of Kibaki's government and is now Secretary General of the ODM.) Odinga and others rebelled against the president's hand-tailored constitutional revisions. Out of the 2005 referendum that rejected Kibaki's Constitution was born the ODM, which split last year to field two presidential candidates, only one of whom managed to break out of his ethnic enclave to command significant support across the country. That man, Raila Odinga, is also the only one who can now hold Kenya together democratically.

The way forward for Kenyans, to quote Alice Walker, is with a broken heart such as I face when hearing that Luos have been chased out of Limuru, the town where I spent my salad days. We know this ugly violence is not Kenya, but the sooner we admit that it has happened to us anyway, the quicker we will wrest this process from the hands of unscrupulous politicians and build a new, multicultural and more egalitarian society. TAVIA NYONG'O

Tavia Nyong'o, a Kenyan American professor at NYU, witnessed the recent elections in Kenya and is blogging about the outcome at http://bluegum.typepad.com/kenya.

Obama's Wide Net

Despite the different outcomes for his campaign in Iowa and New Hampshire, Barack Obama won among young voters in both states—and more important, he drew them to the polls in unprecedented numbers. People under 30 made up a third of his support in Iowa—four times the margin of victory—and their turnout was up 19 percentage points from 2004 in New Hampshire. Obama has inspired them, just as Howard Dean did last cycle, but the Chicago organizer's campaign excelled by using technology that mobilized new and young voters to actually show up and be counted.

COMMENT

In Iowa, Obama's aides systematically used the popular social networking site Facebook for targeting and organizing. Allison York, a 20-year-old Obama supporter and student at Iowa's Drake University, spent six hours of her winter break driving from her parents' Wichita home to Des Moines to a caucus location she found through Facebook. Another student launched a Facebook challenge that recruited more than a million supporters for Obama across the country. And one field organizer created a group for Iowans pledging to caucus for Obama—the first web version of the famous "supporter cards" that candidates urge voters to sign—drawing more than 1,000 people who were not in the party database. "We try to just go where the people are," explained Obama's online organizer in Iowa. "Facebook, because of its size, is where the people are, which is why we've taken it so seriously as a campaign."

Obama's official Facebook profile has about 200,000 "friends"—more than triple Hillary Clinton's network and six times John Edwards's yield. Clinton's top strategists once mocked those numbers, telling reporters, "Our people look like caucus-goers [and Obama's] look like Facebook." But after Clinton placed third in Iowa, they hastily tried to catch up. She toured New Hampshire with students, held "roundtables with young undecided voters," talked up a new idea for a "government blogging team" and launched an "Ask Hillary" Facebook feature on the day of the New Hampshire debate (which was co-sponsored by Facebook and ABC News). Those efforts paid off, giving her a boost among young people above her Iowa showing, but it's probably too late for her to overtake Obama in organic online support. Beyond Facebook, Obama has the most friends on MySpace and BlackPlanet—about 630,000 combined—and the most traffic by far on YouTube, where people can watch him sans media filter. (After Obama's stirring Iowa victory speech was uploaded, his official channel alone spiked by more than 1.5 million views.) Obama is also remarkably popular on apolitical Internet terrain. He regularly ranks atop Eventful, an entertainment site that helps fans join forces to request local concerts by their favorite bands. He netted appearance requests from eighty towns in Iowa and has held his own against rock stars across the country, currently ranking third behind the rap group Wu-Tang Clan.

Obama's aides have not simply been riding a wave of hit websites; they also built their own social networking portal to connect and empower activists. Chris Hughes, a 24-year-old co-founder of Facebook, joined the Obama campaign to build MyBO, which invites users to network, blog and promote grassroots events. Unlike many campaigns that treat web politics as a separate silo, Obama's field program is tightly integrated with MyBO. Iowa organizers were required to post all their events on the site and encouraged to write MyBO blog posts, vetted by the campaign, about local efforts. And the campaign trusts supporters to post whatever they want, from house parties to fundraising ideas to blog commentaries. More than 350,000 people have already created MyBO accounts, posting more than 10,000 grassroots events offline, including 1,000 gatherings where supporters simply wear Obama buttons and do community service in their neighborhoods. No other campaign has a decentralized program like it. While young participants are active, the majority of users, according to the site's administrator, appear to be middle-aged women.

Cheryl Kimmel, 48, is a self-declared "Deaniac" who first learned about Obama when Dean fundraised for Obama's 2004 Senate primary. This month, Kimmel used MyBO to announce a house party for undecided voters. "It's a good way to reach out to people that may be interested but that aren't in the fold," she explained. MyBO is not just for Deaniacs. Frank Dickerson voted for Bush's re-election, but the 59-year-old "recovering

(continued on page 23)

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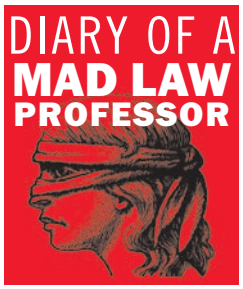
Patricia J. Williams

American Pie

There's a picture floating around the Internet of President Bush weeping at a memorial service. One long tear streaks his cheek, and his thin lips are pressed together hard, as though trying to flatten a nickel. "I've got God's shoulder to cry on," is the line attributed to him. It's a stock moment of "presidential" caring, a cliché of manly mourning. Just the single tear allowed to run the full length of one cheek, undabbed, lips pressed fortitudinously.

Apparently this captures what it means to be "presidential" at a time when the disastrous Bush presidency has left our economy ruined, our international reputation a shambles, NASA in the hands of people who don't believe global warming is a threat, our soldiers mired in a "pre-emptive" war, the Geneva Conventions and the Nuremberg codes violated, the Justice Department gutted. Frankly, I could care less about the visuals. Yet to judge by the popular media, being "presidential" is akin to winning a popularity contest in middle school. It's all about what they wear, how tall they are, how much they spend on a haircut, whether their spouses are spousal enough, who has a "forced jackal laugh" (as the *Guardian* described Hillary Clinton), who is "blessed with a weighty baritone" (as *Newsweek* described Obama).



As November draws nearer, the race is likely to become much nastier. Republican strategist Richard Viguerie has promised to figure the Democratic Party as the umbrella of women, wusses and special interests. The powers that outed Valerie Plame, the lobbies that mocked Clinton's proposals for healthcare as an ungodly communist plot, the Swift Boat gang and the deep-pocketed Scaife Foundation—they haven't gone anywhere. Republicans can't win on their record; their strategy will depend on having us forget that when Bill Clinton left office, he not only had balanced the budget but left a significant surplus of strong dollars. In casting the Clintons as a power-hungry "dynasty," they would have us forget that it is Republicans who have reinterpreted the presidency as a monarchic "unitary executive." It is my hope that we can inoculate ourselves against the apocalyptic nastiness that the past two elections indicate we may be in for. In anticipation of that turn to the low, however, it's worth looking at the race and gender narratives already circulating, whose exploitation we need to resist.

Barack Obama personifies a civil rights triumph for which we as a society have yearned but are a long way from achieving (given prison, health and poverty statistics alone). But even as he silently telegraphs the image of longed-for victory, should he actually talk too much about racial equality or all that remains to be done, he risks reducing his iconicity as one who floats above it all. In the months to come, I expect he'll be prodded and poked about this, in an all-out media effort to conform him in the polarizing, no-win contradictions that weigh upon his typecasting as a non-raced race man. Thus far he's done an admirable job of avoiding the trap; he uses the rhetorical tropes of the civil rights movement in an expansive, inclusive way. He has attracted a constituency of whites and blacks, women and men, Asians and independents—and even a few Republicans. But there are things to brace for: if history is any guide, his suavity will be construed as too silky smooth, his suits too tailored, his "agenda" too black. Maureen Dowd says that the Obamas "radiate a sense that they are owed." *Newsweek* sneaked in that Obama tends "toward the grandiose" and that his wife, Michelle, keeps him from "getting too full of himself." Owed? Grandiose? Intimations of "uppityness" will waft up in new guises.

If the script of a strong woman who controls her husband is for now just background noise in depicting the Obamas, it is a full-scale derangement as applied to Hillary Clinton. Much is made of Obama's winning in overwhelmingly white Iowa, but less is said about the fact that he and John Edwards, who came in second, are men. As Senator Clinton campaigned there, it was to the snarky drone of Rush Limbaugh's chuckling about her wrinkles and babbling about how no one wants to watch a middle-aged woman grow old. Dowd cast Clinton as a "dominatrix" "control freak" who "whips" men into line, who "owns" Obama by snubbing him. On NPR, an Iowan who identified herself as 95 tittered in her papery voice that "all the women are in love" with Obama. No such happy flirtation with "all the guys" is attributed to Clinton, the pants-wearing, perpetually suspected lesbian murderess of Vince Foster. At Christmas, Hillary Clinton nutcrackers were quite the snapped-up item.

Not that there's any consistency to prejudice of this sort. If Clinton-haters have gotten their jollies from painting her as "steely" and remote, in the mere mist of an eye she became *too* soft, wavery, choked up, broken down, beaten up. Headlines implied that Clinton had lost it and was sobbing wetly on someone other than God's shoulder. "Hillary Clinton Gets Emotional." "Play of the Day: Clinton Chokes Up." "Teary-Eyed Clinton Vows to Fight On." Yet the video showed her speaking of her plans for the country with eloquent emotion and great composure, her voice soft but strong. She appeared tired but was well spoken and cautionary about the political crossroads we face. There were no tears. There was nothing undignified about it.

I hope that we Americans can resist the vicious vacuity of politics at the level of whether Tara Reid has hit "scarily skinny." We will have enough to deal with as the right's Rovian spinmeisters kick into action, wrapping both Obama and Clinton in sticky webs of hybridized stereotypes. She will be too "mannish," he too "boyish." She'll be too familiar, he too foreign. He'll be a wimp, she'll be a pimp. Yet this is an extraordinary moment in American history—we have our first serious black and female presidential candidates. It is my audacious little hope that the two of them, in whatever order, will become running mates by November. They must not fall prey to those who would love to see them wound each other before then, in the scramble to be top dog. ■

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Eric Alterman

The Lies of Quinn-Broderville

Washington Post pundit Richard Cohen says John Edwards and Barack Obama are liars. The first sentence of his first column of 2008 reads: "John Edwards lied about the cost of his haircuts." Cohen presents no evidence for this comically ridiculous accusation and does not refer to it again in the rest of the column. But since I'd never heard it before, I e-mailed Cohen to ask him to substantiate it. I received no reply. When it comes to calling John Edwards a liar in the *Post*, evidence is apparently unnecessary.

As for Obama, Cohen writes that his "lie or fib or misstatement—call it what you want" is the following: "more young black men are in prison than in college." Here, Cohen cites the *Post*'s "lonesome but formidable truth squad, Michael Dobbs," who, he says, "brought this to the attention of the Obama campaign" but "got the brushoff." One reason Dobbs might have been brushed off is that Obama was telling the truth. Mark Kleiman, who teaches courses on crime control and drug policy at UCLA and ran the policy shop in the criminal division of the Justice Department under Ronald Reagan, explains that according to US Census figures, 810,000 black males are behind bars at any one time in this country, while only 410,000 are enrolled in four-year colleges or graduate school. In order to disprove Obama's contention, it is necessary, Kleiman explains, to include every black male taking a course at almost any post-secondary educational institution. Otherwise, Cohen and Dobbs are the liars. Kleiman says he contacted Cohen and Dobbs but got the brushoff.

I contacted Dobbs as well, this time about Edwards. I asked him for evidence for his insistence—also made on the *Post*'s front page—that when Edwards claimed that NAFTA has cost Americans "millions of jobs," this was "demonstrably false," an assertion Dobbs did not bother to support anywhere in the article. Dobbs ignored my request, but searching for evidence myself I found his argument on his *Washington Post* "factchecker" page. There's an argument there, sure, but on the Economic Policy Institute's website, I also found figures supporting the claim that NAFTA has displaced approximately a million jobs. What's more, I found a video on YouTube in which Edwards can be seen to claim that "NAFTA, CAFTA and other trade agreements cost us millions of jobs." So what Dobbs uses to paint Edwards as a liar is really nothing more than Edwards saying "millions" when he meant "about a million" or forgetting to add "CAFTA and other trade agreements" when discussing the issue.

What is most interesting here is the confidence enjoyed by these two *Washington Post* writers as they smear Democratic candidates on the basis of nitpicky or nonexistent evidence. After all, this is the same paper that regularly relays George W. Bush's lies with uncritical, near-stenographic accuracy. Yet Obama and Edwards are called liars when they tell the truth.

This happens, I would submit, because to imply that institutional racism continues to rule the American justice system, per Obama, or that so-called free-trade agreements destroy more working-class jobs than they create, per Edwards, is beyond the parameters of responsible dialogue inside the cozy village I like to call "Quinn-Broderville," where the *Post* is Chief Enforcement Officer. While Cohen and Dobbs also dealt with alleged Republican falsehoods, Cohen at least generously tipped his hand by explaining that John McCain's easily disproven claim that the Constitution established the United States as a "Christian nation" did not bother him so much because "I know McCain, and I know his character."

It is just a coincidence that the Cohen and Dobbs pieces were published around the time the *New York Times* announced its decision to offer a spot on its op-ed page to William Kristol, but it is a useful one nevertheless. According to the Alice-in-Wonderland ideological rules of the Washington punditocracy, having supported the catastrophic war in Iraq demonstrates your good judgment and overall reliability, while opposing job-displacing, environment-destroying trade agreements paints you as a dangerous radical.

While it is certainly possible that *Times* readers would benefit from a second conservative columnist alongside Kristol's onetime protégé David Brooks, the paper insults its readers, and itself, by picking one with a long record not only of putting the interests of the conservative movement ahead of the truth but of impugning the honesty, integrity and patriotism of anyone who refuses to join his jihad. Back in the Fantasy Island days of Mission Accomplished, Kristol thundered in McCarthyite terms against the "*New York Times* editorial page" along with anyone who dared disagree with George W. Bush, Dick Cheney and their neocon cheerleaders. "These liberals—better, leftists," he roared, "hate George W. Bush so much they can barely bring themselves to hope America wins the war.... They hate Don Rumsfeld so much they can't bear to see his military strategy vindicated. They hate John Ashcroft so much they relish the thought of his Justice Department flubbing the war on terrorism. They hate conservatives with a passion that seems to burn brighter than their love of America."

Though Richard Cohen also supported the Iraq War, many issues undoubtedly separate the longtime *Post* "liberal" from the *Times*'s newest neocon. And Michael Dobbs would presumably insist that his journalism is largely free from ideology of any kind. But each operates within the well-defined borders of the assumptions of Quinn-Broderville. And this means that when you call liberals names and question their honesty and patriotism, you may do so with impunity and without evidence. The "lesson," as Ann Coulter explained in a moment of unprecedented cogency, "is it's really not that scary to attack liberals." ■

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The Voter ID Fraud

CHRISTOPHER SERRA

Indiana's Republican-passed voter ID law excludes the poor, who tend to vote Democratic. How will a Republican-leaning Supreme Court come out?

by GARRETT EPPS

There's a war on across the country over who will be allowed to vote in 2008. One of the key battles in the election was fought on January 9 before the Supreme Court.

The case is called *Crawford v. Marion County Election Board*. It tests an Indiana statute, passed in 2005, requiring voters to present a government-issued ID before they can cast a ballot. The law is aimed at alleged fraudulent voting by unregistered or noncitizen voters. Republicans insist that these voters pose a major problem, despite the fact that every systematic study of the question has concluded that this kind of fraud—called "voter impersonation"—is all but unknown in the United States right now. In fact, authorities in Indiana could not point to a single case of voter impersonation in the state's history.

Voter ID laws span a wide spectrum. The federal Help America Vote Act (HAVA), passed in 2002, provides that all states must require ID from first-time voters who register by mail. But twenty-five states and the District of Columbia have gone beyond this. Eighteen require all voters to produce some form of ID, which may be a bank statement or utility bill sent to their address. Two require a photo ID, which may include employee or other unofficial IDs. Arizona requires all voters to produce either one government-issued ID or two other identifications. Indiana stands alone in requiring that the ID have a photo and be issued by the government—the most difficult forms of identification to obtain. Voters who don't have such IDs are supposed to cast "provisional" ballots, which will be counted only if they show up at election headquarters with a proper ID within a few days of the voting.

The more restrictive the law, the greater the likelihood that it will tip a close election by turning away legal voters—mostly the poor, minorities and the elderly. It's not a coincidence that these voters tend to vote Democratic. In fact, the State of Indiana, in its filings with the Supreme Court, admits that the litigation represents "politics by other means." This flippant attitude toward the right to vote permeates the state's argument. Unfortunately, the Supreme Court has shown signs that it shares the view that turning voters away from the polls is constitutionally unimportant.

A coalition of Democratic Party officials and activists promptly challenged the Indiana law. A federal district court dismissed their challenge on the ground that they had not shown that the law would actually prevent anyone from voting. The plaintiffs presented an exhaustive study by a well-known election expert estimating the number of registered Indiana voters who lacked ID at nearly 1 million; the district judge, however, dismissed the report as "utterly incredible and unreliable."

On appeal, Judge Richard Posner of the Second Circuit admitted that "some people who have not bothered to obtain a photo ID will not bother to do so just to be allowed to vote." He further admits that "no doubt most people who don't have

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photo ID are low on the economic ladder and thus, if they do vote, are more likely to vote for Democratic than Republican candidates." But what's the big deal? It's only a few voters.

So what if there's no evidence of voter impersonation? That's the media's fault, Posner says. The lack of cases "may reflect nothing more than the vagaries of journalists' and other investigators' choice of scandals to investigate."

Even without the ID law, voters in Indiana and elsewhere often must show evidence of eligibility. In some states the voter must sign a polling book before receiving a ballot. Election officials compare the signature with an official one on file. In addition, poll watchers from the two parties can look at the book and challenge any voter whose signature doesn't appear to match. Partisan poll watchers have every incentive to check the signatures carefully.

No one on either side of the issue disputes that voter fraud occurs. But study after study has made clear that documented fraud is almost exclusively confined to absentee ballots. Absentee voting is one area where Republicans have traditionally out-organized Democrats; the new voter ID laws make almost no reforms to the absentee-vote system.

Unlike virtually every modern democratic constitution, ours nowhere explicitly guarantees every competent citizen a right to vote.

The voter-fraud argument comes down to a kind of duel over common sense. Voter ID proponents dismiss the lack of evidence; it stands to reason, they say, that if requirements are not strict, ineligible people will vote. Opponents counter that if it's hard to vote, some legal voters won't go to the polls. Whose votes matter? In recent years, conservative groups have insisted that precedence should go to "legitimate" voters, the kind of people who have ready access to ID. After all, Posner notes, "try flying, or even entering a tall building such as the courthouse in which we sit, without one." The roughly 18 percent of Americans who have never flown on a commercial airline are less worthy of concern.

The Indiana case will likely have an influence on a number of ID cases around the country. Arizona has in place a law requiring voters to prove their citizenship by presenting not just a driver's license but a passport or birth certificate upon registering and a photo ID at the polls. The city of Albuquerque changed its charter to require a photo ID at the polls. In Georgia the Republican legislature voted to require government-issued ID; the same session of the legislature voted to double the fee for such an ID. A federal court in Georgia initially blocked that ID law but then dismissed the challenge after the legislature amended the statute to waive the fee. The Albuquerque charter amendment has been stayed by a federal judge; the Georgia case is on appeal. At stake is the potential margin of victory in a close election.

If you doubt that, consider Missouri. Its law—the most restrictive in the country—was struck down before the 2006 election as a violation of the state Constitution. Senator Claire McCaskill went on to defeat Republican incumbent Jim Talent by a mere 48,314 votes out of 2,128,455 cast, a margin of only 2.3 percent.

The strongest argument *for* ID laws arises from the 1993 National Voter Registration Act, also known as the "motor voter" law. This act encourages mail-in voter registration and mandates that the states distribute registration forms at their driver's license bureaus. The result has been an increase in duplicate or obsolete registrations on state voter rolls, which could lead to mischief. The Help America Vote Act requires states to centralize voter lists and eliminate duplicate registrations. But many states haven't done so. Nevertheless, inflated voter rolls are a separate problem, which can be addressed by funding and implementing HAVA. To justify ID requirements, advocates need to provide evidence of voter fraud.

The obsession with voter fraud has been orchestrated by the Republican Party, with Karl Rove playing a significant role. The US Attorney firings scandal under Alberto Gonzales seems to have stemmed, in part, from Republicans' desire to push federal prosecutors into going after voters' rights and poor people's groups like ACORN for their turnout-the-vote activities. In Wisconsin, voter fraud prosecutions netted convictions of a number of small-fish activists who mishandled registration cards and individual voters who filled out two registration cards or attempted to vote despite being convicted felons or on criminal probation. Prosecutors have lost more than half the cases they've brought. In Washington, where Democrat Christine Gregoire narrowly defeated Dino Rossi for governor in 2004, officials of the Justice Department removed US Attorney John McKay, who refused to bring voter fraud charges tied to the election.

Lacking evidence, the Republicans have shifted their argument. Now it runs: "legitimate voters" will lose confidence in elections if they think there's voter fraud, so the government must clamp down even without evidence. Unfortunately, there are signs that the Supreme Court has bought this New Age-y "voter feelings" argument. In early 2006, voters' rights groups challenged the Arizona law requiring proof of citizenship. The Ninth Circuit enjoined the law pending a full trial; the state appealed to the US Supreme Court, which allowed the law to take effect without a trial. Some voters "who fear their legitimate votes will be outweighed by fraudulent ones will feel disenfranchised," the Court reasoned in an unsigned opinion. The case is awaiting a full trial. A study has shown that some 5,000 voter registrations in Arizona, virtually all for eligible voters, were rejected in a six-month period for failure to provide proof of citizenship.

Folklore pervades the history of voter fraud in the United States. During the era of "live voice" voting, when voters shouted their choices in front of their neighbors, there was rampant bribery, intimidation, miscounting and voter imper-

Garrett Epps teaches constitutional law at the University of Oregon. His Democracy Reborn: The Fourteenth Amendment and the Fight for Equal Rights in Post–Civil War America *won a 2007 Oregon Book Award. Next fall he will become a law professor at the University of Baltimore.*

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sonation. Roving gangs of ringers, plied with whiskey and $2 bills, voted in multiple locations under false names.

During the Gilded Age and the Progressive era, as Alex Keyssar documents in his monumental study *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States*, the idea of the fraudulent voter coincided with social anxiety among the "better sort" about the political influence of the uneducated and recent immigrants. Whether or not they were legally entitled to vote, their votes were seen almost as fraudulent per se. In the turn-of-the-century South, voter restriction was a keystone of the burgeoning segregated system. "Voter fraud" meant votes cast by black and poor white voters. In the West, fraud meant voting by Native Americans.

The current restriction movement preys on a new wave of immigration anxiety. In his 2004 book *Stealing Elections*, John Fund, now an editorialist for the *Wall Street Journal*, warned dramatically that "at least eight of the nineteen hijackers who attacked the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were actually able to register to vote in either Virginia or Florida while they made their deadly preparations for 9/11." (Fund told me that the information came from an interview with Michael Chertoff, now Secretary of Homeland Security, while he was a Justice Department official. Fund suggested that Chertoff's statement may have come from secret information. Two academics—Spencer Overton of George Washington University and Lorraine Minnite of Barnard—have been unable to confirm the "registered hijacker" claim with election officials.)

The issue in *Crawford v. Marion County Election Board* is likely to boil down to a complex legal concept that lawyers call the "level of scrutiny." This refers to the degree of proof that courts require to justify a government action. If a law restricts a trivial right, such as the right to smoke in public, all they need is a decent reason; if it restricts a fundamental right, like the right to travel interstate, officials must offer a convincing explanation and actual facts to support the law.

So the question will be: is making it burdensome or impossible for some people to vote a trivial abridgment or a serious impairment of an important part of full citizenship? Posner's opinion makes clear his view that casting an individual vote is no big deal. He cites a 1992 Supreme Court case, *Burdick v. Takushi*, that upheld a Hawaii ban on write-in voting. In *Burdick*, the Court said that strict scrutiny applied only to "severe" burdens of the individual's right to participate in elections. Regulations that, for example, limit the choice of candidates, however, need only be "reasonable" and "nondiscriminatory." (Interestingly, Justice Anthony Kennedy, whose vote is always decisive in close cases, dissented in *Burdick*, holding that the Hawaii write-in ban did not pass even loose scrutiny.)

But *Burdick* concerned the voters' right to choose a candidate not on the ballot—the Hawaii law did not deprive anyone of the right to cast a vote. Earlier cases have suggested that measures barring voters altogether are subject to "strict scrutiny," the standard that applies to proving government discrimination by race. If strict scrutiny is in effect, then officials in Indiana and elsewhere would actually have to produce facts to support their statute. It would certainly be impossible to be as flippant as Posner was about the flaws in the Indiana statute: "Perhaps the Indiana law can be improved—what can't be?"

The subtext of this case, and of the war over the vote, is a defect in America's patchwork Constitution. Unlike virtually every modern democratic constitution, ours nowhere explicitly guarantees every competent citizen the right to vote. States can't restrict the vote by race, or sex, or failure to pay a poll tax, or by age for anyone over 18; but the document nowhere says that eligible voters have a right to their vote. In fact, when Supreme Court Justices discuss voting rights, they often refer to this most basic of rights in scare quotes—"the 'right' to vote." This allows judges to adopt a kind of faux neutrality: some people want to vote; others don't want them to vote—the outcome is merely a matter of expediency.

This is desperately wrongheaded. In virtually every other advanced democracy, voting has a positive value: it is not up to the citizen to seek out a registrar or produce a satisfactory ID. Instead, the government itself is required to find and register every eligible voter and, if necessary, to provide each voter with an official ID without charge.

Amending the Constitution to guarantee the vote is an important long-term goal. But Congress can do much to ensure that this mischief does not grow, spread and become entrenched. Article I, Section 4, declares that the states shall regulate elections, unless Congress steps in. Congress could pass a statute requiring states to conduct fair, nonpartisan registration and to allow citizens to vote with a signature.

Currently before Congress are a variety of piecemeal reforms. Hillary Clinton's wide-ranging Count Every Vote bill would require states to accept an affidavit of citizenship as part of the mail-in registration process and would make it harder for state officials to toss out mail-in registrations for small errors. Barack Obama has a narrower bill aimed at measures that deceive voters about their eligibility. Representative Keith Ellison has offered legislation to block state ID requirements, but his bill has sparked little support.

The ID issue should be higher on the Democratic agenda. Voting is more than a matter of individual preference, like Coke or Pepsi. Free participation protects our political system from a more insidious kind of corruption in which elites govern without undue worry about public repudiation.

Vote suppression in the United States has a long and sordid past and present. Anonymous postcards often warn registered voters in black neighborhoods that they are ineligible. Fliers warn that any voter with an outstanding warrant will be arrested at the polls. Phone calls threaten eligible voters with criminal prosecution.

Thirty years ago, I saw white Southern registrars driving black voters away by threatening them with federal voter fraud charges. In 2004 I received an e-mail from my son, from a Southern election headquarters. He was fielding calls from black voters who were being turned away from the polls for minor errors in registration or failure to show an ID.

It is mortifying that we are passing this mortal flaw in our system down to the next generation. Voting lies at the heart of our national life, and efforts to restrict it to the "right" people corrode our very commitment to freedom. Perhaps we should consider radical change in our system.

Perhaps we should consider democracy. ■

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Scars and Stripes

Like the rest of the country, Liberia's former child soldiers bear the psychic and physical marks of a brutal fourteen-year civil war, and their future depends on the largesse of strangers.

by RUTHIE ACKERMAN

Monrovia

Jion's one leg is carrying him as fast as it can go. As he races down the field on his crutches the stadium is silent, waiting to see if the goalie can block his shot. Jion kicks. The goalie catches the ball and throws it back onto the field. Jion turns around and runs again, swinging his body to gain momentum.

Jion plays soccer for the Amputee All Stars, a team made up of former fighters and war-affected youth, all of whom lost limbs in Liberia's fourteen-year civil war. On a recent Thursday morning, the Antoinette Tubman Stadium in downtown Monrovia is filled with cheering fans as the Mighty Conquerors' one-armed goalie misses the ball and the other team scores. Suddenly, the Rev. Jervis Witherspoon, executive director of the National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (DDRR), stands up and shouts half-jokingly, "We need to get those guys off the street so they can really play soccer!"

Two days later in his office, Reverend Witherspoon explains what he meant. "It looks bad that the soccer players are going around representing the country, and they don't have work and they're living on the beach. Even if we sit them behind a desk, it will keep them off the streets."

Indeed, while the soccer players are held up around the world as the new hope of Liberia, in reality many of these young men sleep on the streets at night, and beg for money to buy food, even showing their soccer identification cards so people might have pity on them and donate some extra cash.

Even as the international press cheers the soccer players on, aid from the global community for the reintegration and skills-building programs that would help these young men make a living is tied up in bureaucratic snafus or in aid packages with too many strings attached. Security sector reform is a higher priority for the Bush Administration, with $45 million provided in June to rebuild the Liberian Armed Forces, support the training of the national police force and equip the protective detail for the president. This imbalance in favor of military aid persists despite the plea of Liberia's president, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, who asked the US Congress on March 15, 2006, for more funding for training and rehabilitation programs. "What is the return on an investment that trains young combatants for life, rather than death? What is the yield when our young men can exchange their guns for jobs?"

Could the $800,000 allocated to DynCorp, the private US military contractor, to train the new army have been used to feed, house and provide healthcare to former fighters? Sure. But let's not forget that the US government's policy of beefing up Liberia's army goes back to Ronald Reagan, who provided military aid that ultimately fueled President Samuel Doe's brutal regime, leading to the civil war that left 250,000 dead and up to half the country's population displaced. When the cold war waned, Liberia was moved to the back burner. Now, with the "war on terror" in full swing, Liberia is back at the forefront of America's military imagination, vying to be the headquarters for Africom, the new US Africa Command, which will coordinate all the US military and security interests on the continent.

ANDRE LAMBERTSON

Many former child soldiers live on the beach, disabled. They survive by begging.

The 2005 election of Sirleaf, a Harvard-educated economist and finance minister under Liberian President William Tolbert, was hailed as a victory for the country. Promises of aid and encouraging words flowed in from every corner of the globe. But after two years in office she is still struggling to jump through hoops to get the funding necessary to implement programs and rebuild the infrastructure Liberia so badly needs.

"What you have is a whole lot of rhetoric for support for Africa's first woman president and not a lot of substance," said Emira Woods, co-director of Foreign Policy in Focus at the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, DC. "Of the aid that does get on the ground from bilateral institutions, there's either strings attached or pledges are made and not followed through or the money is being used for security sector reform and not rehabilitation."

One example of a strings-attached aid policy is the anti-corruption commission the International Monetary Fund required Liberia to set up before it would cancel the country's debt. The second condition for the arrears clearance to go forward was that the central bank be brought under the Finance Ministry to control the money supply and the inflation rate,

Ruthie Ackerman, a reporter based in Brooklyn, New York, is writing a book about the legacy of US colonial ties with Liberia. Her work in Liberia was produced with support from the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting.

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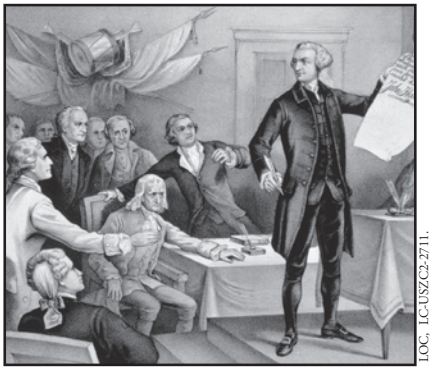

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John Hancock signing the Declaration of Independence

About Your Professor

Professor Thomas L. Pangle holds the Joe R. Long Chair in Democratic Studies in the Department of Government at The University of Texas at Austin. He received his B.A. from Cornell University and his Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Chicago. Before joining the faculty at The University of Texas, Professor Pangle taught at Yale University, Dartmouth University, the University of Chicago, and the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in Paris. He is the recipient of many awards and accolades including four fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Robert Foster Cherry Great Teacher of the World Prize from Baylor University.

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even though Liberia's central bank is modeled on that of the United States. In a sense, Woods points out, Liberia is being asked to sacrifice schools and hospitals to have inflation at single digits and an anticorruption commission that even the United States doesn't have. "So to create this almost artificial standard in the case of Liberia as a rationale for not giving funding, to me seems idiotic."

While the multilateral and bilateral institutions drag their feet over funding, Sirleaf's hands are tied. There's not much she can do when Liberia's budget for this year is $199 million. Although that's an increase from the $135 million budget for last year, it's still only about $60 per Liberian. That makes providing electricity and running water, not to mention tackling the country's 85 percent unemployment rate and 42 percent illiteracy rate, daunting if not insurmountable challenges. Meanwhile, the president's promise to empower Liberia's youth to be full participants in the reconstruction of the country now rings hollow.

Even before Sirleaf came into office the DDRR rehabilitation program, which promised former soldiers $300 to put down their guns and pick up a book, was widely criticized. The reason: the funding was sufficient only to disarm 38,000 former fighters, but almost 103,000 applied. This meant that rehabilitation efforts had to be cut short or even stopped altogether. Human Rights Watch estimates the funding shortage at $39 million, leaving 40,000 ex-combatants at risk of missing out on job training and education.

Even those who did receive training said it was often delayed or the teachers were inadequate. And the tools that were supposed to be delivered upon completion of the programs, such as sewing kits and baking sets, often never arrived.

Part of the problem was that the whole process was prone to corruption. Commanders turned in the guns of their former fighters for cash. Ex-combatants sold their guns to nonfighters who then enrolled in the DDRR program. Some took the cash and never completed the rehabilitation programs. Meanwhile, those who completed the skills-training and education programs were often left without jobs in Liberia's struggling economy. For many, living on the streets became the only option.

Some of the youth who were disarmed made their way to the United States as refugees, settling in communities like the Park Hill Apartments in Staten Island, New York, without receiving counseling or rehabilitation and often lacking skills or education. Some of them were still addicted to drugs. Others suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder or other mental illnesses. Yet the focus of the US government's refugee program is economic self-sufficiency. "This means they are employed. Period," explained Elizabeth Campbell, director of the Refugee Council.

Federal funding provides $850 per refugee—$425 goes directly to the refugee for resettlement, and the other $425 goes to the agency for the first thirty days of basic needs support. Campbell calls the $425 given to the agencies "a joke," especially in places with higher costs of living, like New York: "You are not seeing a federal commitment to make sure refugees have access to reintegration services."

The consequences of these policies can be seen in the Liberian youth living in Park Hill. James Kollie, a case manager for an agency that resettles Liberians in Staten Island, says the whole system—from the organizations that set out to help the youth to the governments of Liberia and the United States—is failing. Kollie has seen newly arrived youth sleeping in hallways and staircases because the families who are supposed to take them in are overburdened. And he's seen teenagers drinking and drugging their days away because they have nothing to keep them busy, as job- and skills-training programs are unavailable and local rehabilitation offices are almost nonexistent because funding for refugee resettlement is limited and competitive. "It's like you're fighting crime and then creating criminals" by leaving young people with so few options, Kollie says.

Some of the youth who were disarmed made their way to the United States as refugees, settling in communities such as Staten Island.

For President Sirleaf, one of the biggest stumbling blocks is that the former warlords she is trying to distance herself from are still members of her cabinet. Jewel Howard Taylor is senator for Bong County although she is under a UN travel ban and assets freeze. Prince Johnson, who helped steer Liberia into civil war and ordered the torture of ousted President Doe, was elected as a senator. And Adolphus Dolo, a commander under Taylor who was responsible for the recruitment of child soldiers, was elected to the legislature.

Sirleaf also has to deal with the enormous weight of the debt burden accumulated by her predecessors, who used at least part of the funds to fuel Liberia's civil war and didn't worry about making payments. The bind Liberia finds itself in today is that it must clear its past-due bills to the IMF, the World Bank and the African Development Bank in order to receive any new funding from the multilateral institutions to reopen schools, start job-training programs or reintegrate people into communities. Two years into Sirleaf's presidency, Liberia only now has been able to secure an agreement to cancel the $1.5 billion in debt that is in arrears. Liberia is eligible for the three-year, IMF-supported initiative for heavily indebted poor countries, which will ultimately lead to the clearing of the country's $4.1 billion of principal debt.

"The debt campaigners celebrate the arrears clearance as a victory because the country is no longer held hostage," Emira Woods said. "But we recognize it's a long way to go to get full cancellation of Liberia's principal debt." To get there, Liberia will have to jump through even more hoops, as it is required to privatize, lower public spending and keep tabs on inflation.

Meanwhile, former fighters such as Jion continue to sleep on the streets, begging for money and food.

Although Reverend Witherspoon highlights Sirleaf's accomplishments—free education for all children and basic skills

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training for many—he laments that not enough has been done for former soldiers. "We have to avoid ex-combatants going back into the bush and getting involved in conflict that could derail the peace process of the nation," he said, a mission that is becoming more difficult as the wars in Guinea and the Ivory Coast rage on and former fighters view the wars as economic opportunities. In Liberia, where food and resources are scarce, a generation of youth faces this problem. And as long as there are unskilled and uneducated youth, there is the likelihood that there could be another civil war, with a new generation of child soldiers.

At the very least, Witherspoon said, the young men who play on the soccer team, like Jion, should be given a job—any job—to keep them off the streets. But that hasn't happened. When Jion is asked how long he's been sleeping outside the bank on Randall Street, he pauses, thinks for a minute and then says, "For a long time."

For now all Jion can do is wait and hope for help. His answer comes when he's told that he will be one of the soccer players who will join the Amputee All Stars in Turkey. As he limps down Randall Street with his soccer medal from the previous day's game around his neck, he tells anyone who will listen about his upcoming trip. Then after the initial excitement wears off, he asks them if they can spare any change. ■

Repress U

How to build a homeland security campus in seven steps.

by MICHAEL GOULD-WARTOFSKY

JANNA BROWER

Free-speech zones. Taser guns. Hidden cameras. Data mining. A new security curriculum. Private security contractors. Welcome to the homeland security campus.

From Harvard to UCLA, the ivory tower is fast becoming the latest watchtower in Fortress America. The terror warriors, having turned their attention to "violent radicalization and homegrown terrorism prevention"—as it was recently dubbed in a House of Representatives bill of the same name—have set out to reconquer that traditional hotbed of radicalization, the university.

Building a homeland security campus and bringing the university to heel is a seven-step mission:

1. Target dissidents. As the warfare state has triggered dissent, the campus has attracted increasing scrutiny—with student protesters in the cross hairs. The government's number-one target? Peace and justice organizations.

From 2003 to 2007 an unknown number of them made it into the Pentagon's Threat and Local Observation Notice system (TALON), a secretive domestic spying program ostensibly designed to track direct "potential terrorist threats" to the Defense Department itself. In 2006 the ACLU uncovered, via Freedom of Information Act requests, at least 186 specific TALON reports on "anti-military protests" in the United States—some listed as "credible threats"—from student groups at the University of California, Santa Cruz; State University of New York, Albany; Georgia State University; and New Mexico State University, among other campuses.

At more than a dozen universities and colleges, police officers now double as full-time FBI agents, and according to the *Campus Law Enforcement Journal*, they serve on many of the nation's 100 Joint Terrorism Task Forces. These dual-purpose officer-agents have knocked on student activists' doors from North Carolina State to the University of Colorado and, in one case, interrogated an Iraqi-born professor at the University of Massachusetts about his antiwar views.

FBI agents, or their campus stand-ins, don't have to do all the work. Administrators often do it for them, setting up "free-speech zones," which actually constrain speech, and punishing those who step outside them. Protests were typically forced into "free-assembly areas" at the University of Central Florida and Clemson University, while students at Hampton and Pace universities faced expulsion for handing out antiwar fliers, *aka* "unauthorized materials."

2. Lock and load. Many campus police departments are morphing into heavily armed garrisons, equipped with a wide array of weaponry, from Taser stun guns and pepper guns to shotguns and semiautomatic rifles. Lock-and-load policies that began in the 1990s under the rubric of the "war on crime" only escalated with the President's "war on terror." Each school

Michael Gould-Wartofsky, a writer from New York City, is a recent graduate of the new homeland security campus. He has written for TheNation.com, Z Magazine, *Common Dreams and* The Harvard Crimson, *where he was a columnist and editor. His work has appeared in* Poets Against the War *(Nation Books). This article will also appear on TomDispatch.com.*

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shooting—most recently the massacre at Virginia Tech—adds fuel to the armament flames.

Two-thirds of universities arm their police, according to the Justice Department. Many of the guns being purchased were previously in the province of military units and SWAT teams: for instance, AR-15 rifles (similar to M-16s) are in the arsenals of the University of Texas campus police. Last April City University of New York bought dozens of semiautomatic handguns. Some states, like Nevada, are even considering plans to allow university staff to pack heat in a "special reserve officer corps."

Most of the force used on campuses these days, though, comes in less lethal form, such as the rubber bullets and pepper pellets increasingly used to contain student demonstrations. Then there is the ubiquitous Taser, the electroshock weapon recently ruled a "form of torture" by the United Nations. A Taser was used by UCLA police in November 2006 to deliver shock after shock to an Iranian-American student for failing to produce his ID at the Powell Library. A University of Florida student was Tased last September after asking pointed questions of Senator John Kerry at a public forum, his plea "Don't Tase me, bro!" becoming the stuff of pop folklore.

3. Keep an eye (or hundreds of them) focused on campus. Surveillance has become a boom industry nationally—one that now reaches deep into the heart of campuses. In fact, universities have witnessed explosive growth since 2001 in the electronic surveillance of students, faculty and campus workers. On ever more campuses, closed-circuit security cameras can track people's every move, often from hidden or undisclosed locations, sometimes even into classrooms.

The International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators reports that surveillance cameras have found their way onto at least half of all colleges, their numbers on any given campus doubling, tripling or, in a few cases, rising tenfold since September 11, 2001. Such cameras have proliferated by the hundreds on private campuses, in particular. The University of Pennsylvania, for instance, has more than 400 watching over it, while Harvard and Brown have about 200 each.

Often it can be tricky to find out where the cameras are and just what they're meant to be viewing. The University of Texas battled student journalists over disclosure and ultimately kept its cameras hidden. Sometimes, though, the cameras' purpose seems obvious. Take the case of Hussein Hussein, a professor in the department of animal biotechnology at the University of Nevada, Reno. In January 2005 the widely respected professor found a hidden camera redirected to monitor his office.

4. Mine student records. Student records have in recent years been opened up to all manner of data mining for purposes of investigation, recruitment or just all-purpose tracking. From 2001 to 2006, in an operation code-named Project Strike Back, the Education Department teamed up with the FBI to scour the records of the 14 million students who applied for federal finan-

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- Jean Giraudoux

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cial aid each year. The objective? "To identify potential people of interest," explained an FBI spokesperson cryptically, especially those linked to "potential terrorist activity."

Strike Back was quietly discontinued in June 2006, days after students at Northwestern University blew its cover. But just one month later, the Education Department's Commission on the Future of Higher Education, in a much-criticized preliminary report, recommended the creation of a federal "unit records" database that would track the activities and studies of college students nationwide. The department's Institute of Education Sciences has developed a prototype for such a national database.

It's not a secret that the Pentagon, for its part, hopes to turn campuses into recruitment centers for its overstretched, overstressed forces. The Defense Department has built its own database for just this purpose. Known as Joint Advertising Market Research and Studies, this program tracks 30 million young people, ages 16 to 25. According to a Pentagon spokesperson, the department has partnered with private marketing and data-mining firms, which in turn sell the government reams of information on students and other potential recruits.

5. Track foreign-born students; keep the undocumented out. Under the auspices of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has been keeping close tabs on foreign students and their dependents through the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). As of October 2007, ICE reported that it was actively following 713,000 internationals on campuses, while keeping more than 4.7 million names in the database.

The database aims to amass and record information on foreign students throughout their stay inside the United States. SEVIS requires thick files on the students from the sponsoring schools, constantly updated with all academic, biographical and employment records—all of which will be shared with other government agencies. If students fall out of "status" at school—or if the database thinks they have—the Compliance Enforcement Unit of ICE goes into action.

ICE, of course, has done its part to keep the homeland security campus purified of those not born in the homeland. The American Immigration Law Foundation estimates that only one in twenty undocumented immigrants who graduate high school goes on to enroll in a college—many don't go because they cannot afford the tuition but also because they have good reason to be afraid: ICE has deported a number of those who did make it to college, some before they could graduate.

6. Take over the curriculum, the classroom and the laboratory. Needless to say, not every student is considered a homeland security threat. Quite the opposite. Many students and faculty members are seen as potential assets. To exploit these assets, DHS has launched its own curriculum under its Office of University Programs (OUP), intended, it says, to "foster a homeland security culture within the academic community."

The record so far is impressive: DHS has doled out 439 federal fellowships and scholarships since 2003, providing full tuition to students who fit "within the homeland security research enterprise." Two hundred twenty-seven schools now offer degree or certificate programs in "homeland security," a curriculum that encompasses more than 1,800 courses. Along with OUP, some of the key players in creating the homeland security classroom are the US Northern Command and the Aerospace Defense Command, co-founders of the Homeland Security and Defense Education Consortium.

OUP has also partnered with researchers and laboratories to "align scientific results with homeland security priorities." In fiscal year 2008 alone, $4.9 billion in federal funding will go to homeland-security-related research. Grants correspond to sixteen research topics selected by DHS, based on presidential directives, legislation and a smattering of scientific advice.

But wait, there's more: DHS has founded and funded six of its very own "Centers of Excellence," research facilities that span dozens of universities from coast to coast. The latest is a Center of Excellence for the Study of Violent Radicalization and Homegrown Terrorism, the funding for which cleared the House in October. The center is mandated to assist a national commission in combating those "adopting or promoting an extremist belief system…to advance political, religious or social change."

7. Privatize, privatize, privatize. Of course, homeland security is not just a department, nor is it simply a new network of surveillance and data mining—it's big business. (According to *USA Today*, global homeland-security-style spending had already reached $59 billion a year in 2006, a sixfold increase over 2000.) Not surprisingly, then, universities have in recent years established unprecedented private-sector partnerships with the corporations that have the most to gain from their research. DHS's on-campus National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terror (START), for instance, features Lockheed Martin on its advisory board. The Center for Food Protection and Defense relies on an industry working group that includes Wal-Mart and McDonald's offering "guidance and direction," according to its chair.

While vast sums of money are flowing in from corporate sponsors, huge payments are also flowing out to "strategic contracts" with private contractors, as universities permanently outsource security operations to big corporations like Securitas and AlliedBarton. Little of this money actually goes to those guarding the properties, who are often among the most underpaid workers in the universities. Instead, it fills the corporate coffers of those with little accountability for conditions on campus.

Meanwhile, some universities have developed intimate relationships with private-security outfits like the notorious Blackwater. Last May, for example, the University of Illinois and its police training institute cut a deal with the firm to share its facilities and training programs with Blackwater operatives. Local journalists later revealed that the director of the campus program at the time was on the Blackwater payroll. In the age of hired education, such collaboration is apparently par for the course.

Following these seven steps over the past six years, the homeland security state and its constituents have come a long way in their drive to remake the American campus in the image of a compound on lockdown. Somewhere inside the growing homeland security state that is our country, the next seven steps

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in the process are undoubtedly already being planned.

Still, the rise of Repress U is not inevitable. The new homeland security campus has proven itself unable to shut out public scrutiny or stamp out resistance to its latest Orwellian advances. Sometimes such opposition even yields a free-speech zone dismantled, or the Pentagon's TALON declawed, or a Project Strike Back struck down. A rising tide of student protest, led by groups like the new Students for a Democratic Society, has won free-speech victories and reined in repression from Pace and Hampton, where the university dropped its threat of expulsion, to UCLA, where Tasers will no longer be wielded against passive resisters.

Yet if the tightening grip of the homeland security complex isn't loosened, the latest towers of higher education will be built not of ivory but of Kevlar for the over-armored, over-armed campuses of America. ■

Comment

(continued from page 9)

Republican" has used it for the past four months to organize events and phone banks at his North Carolina home. His MyBO invitation after Obama's Iowa victory recruited seven new people in a single day, he said, and he is coordinating volunteer trips to South Carolina for the upcoming primary. It's the first time he has ever been politically active.

This kind of self-starting activism could be crucial on February 5, the largest Super Tuesday ever, with primaries in twenty-two states. It is impossible to visit or buy advertising in every state. "Twenty states and all you've got is the candidate on a tarmac—frankly there's not a whole lot that paid media can do," predicts Joe Trippi, who ran Dean's Internet strategy and now works for Edwards. "The traditional old-style top-down centralized campaign structure doesn't work [for this schedule]," he adds, so the key is "to decentralize."

On the night of the Iowa caucuses, Obama's organizers blasted thousands of cellphone text messages to the supporters they had meticulously identified. Younger voters were offered rides. Precinct captains got turnout projections in real time, so they could show undecided caucus attendees that there was statewide momentum. The campaign mobilized others by texting a classic Obama quote, the kind of simple declaration that can sound vague or inspiring, depending on how much idealism you have left: "'In the face of impossible odds, people who love their country can change it'—Barack. One hour until Caucus starts! Be there by 6:30pm & bring 3 friends!" Hours later, more texts went out by cellphone. One urged tens of thousands of supporters across the country to watch the victory speech on television, while a local message announced victory to exhausted volunteers across Iowa, many of whom were still at their caucus sites. The text replies poured in swiftly. "I have tears of joy in my eyes!" wrote one volunteer at 9:14 PM, and another banged out an exhilarating revelation: "I am so happy & excited for the usa! I can not believe it is about politics! Obama for President!"

ARI MELBER

Ari Melber writes frequently for The Nation *on American politics, public policy and Internet activism.*

Christianizing US History

COMMENT

Here is an event I have no intention of honoring: American Religious History Week. OK, it's not official yet. But it is spelled out as Resolution 888 in the bowels of a House committee, sponsored by Republican Congressman Randy Forbes and backed by thirty-one other Representatives. This is an insidious attempt by the radical Christian right to rewrite American history, to turn the founding fathers from deists into Christian fundamentalists, to proclaim us officially to be a Christian nation. If you want to know why Mike Huckabee is dangerous, why his brand of right-wing Christian populism is so frightening, you should read this resolution.

Sent to me by the Military Religious Freedom Foundation, the resolution has passages like this: "Whereas political scientists have documented that the most frequently-cited source in the political period known as The Founding Era was the Bible" and "Whereas the United States Supreme Court has declared throughout the course of our Nation's history that the United States is 'a Christian country', 'a Christian nation', 'a Christian people', 'a religious people whose institutions presuppose a Supreme Being' and that 'we cannot read into the Bill of Rights a philosophy of hostility to religion….'"

The resolution is staggering for its sheer volume of falsehoods about our history, our system of government and our democracy. It asserts that Thomas Jefferson "urged local governments to make land available specifically for Christian purposes, provided Federal funding for missionary work among Indian tribes, and declared that religious schools would receive 'the patronage of the government.'" There are seventy-six preambular clauses like these, leading up to four resolution clauses, the third of which states that the House "rejects, in the strongest possible terms, any effort to remove, obscure, or purposely omit such history from our Nation's public buildings and educational resources."

"House Resolution 888 is perhaps the most disgraceful, shocking and tragic example yet of the pernicious and pervasive pattern and practice of the unconstitutional rape of our bedrock American citizens' religious freedoms by the fundamentalist Christian right," says Michael "Mikey" Weinstein, head of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation and a former White House counsel for President Reagan.

The resolution may never work its way out of committee, and even if it does, it may never be passed. But it is important because it expresses an increasingly influential ideology. It underlies the ideological appeal of the Huckabee campaign, however adroitly the Republican candidate dodges these issues when speaking to the general public. "I hope we answer the alarm clock and take this nation back for Christ," Huckabee told a Baptist convention in 1998. He assured the crowd that he had not entered politics "because I thought government had a better answer. I got into

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politics because I knew government didn't have the real answers, that the real answers lie in accepting Jesus Christ into our lives." And this ideology, as illustrated by Mitt Romney's coded appeal to Christian fundamentalists when giving his recent Texas speech on faith, or even John McCain's humbling trip to Liberty University, has a powerful pull on Republican candidates.

I saw a persistent rewriting of history in numerous Christian history textbooks, used by hundreds of thousands of children, when I wrote *American Fascists: The Christian Right and the War on America*. The revisionists take a minor historical event—in the case of the missionaries, drawing from very rare decisions to provide funds for mission schools or the building of a church on Indian lands—and use it to create a false portrait of a Christian nation. The resolution asserts that the Fourth of July was designed as a Christian holiday, and that in 1977 Congress authorized that Bibles be "printed under their care" and imported for dissemination to the American public. Congress never imported Bibles. But facts matter little.

It is a mistake, despite the seeming implosion of the Republican Party, to count these people out. The Christian radicals have, as the Huckabee candidacy illustrates, broken free from the fetters of their corporate and neocon handlers. They have unleashed a frightening populism that, in the event of an economic meltdown or period of instability, could see the movement ride the wave of a massive right-wing backlash. So when you get tired of the cute sound bites that constitute most coverage of these campaigns, pull out this resolution to remind yourself that we are playing with dynamite, that unless we begin to re-enfranchise tens of millions of Americans—and this means economically—back into the mainstream, unless we again give our workers the chance to earn a living wage, we will fail to blunt this movement and could well fall victim to it.

CHRIS HEDGES

Chris Hedges, former Middle East bureau chief for the New York Times, *is a senior fellow at The Nation Institute.*

Letters

(continued from page 2)

to be defeated by a Congress emboldened by the freeze movement; SDI was a technical fantasy; Reagan's devotion to SDI (and Gorbachev's unnecessary opposition to it) prevented agreement on the abolition of nuclear weapons at Reykjavik. And I believe it is true that Reagan would never have surfaced his abolitionism, so startlingly at odds with his previous policies, if the way had not been prepared by the freeze movement. (Although Reagan had privately expressed his moral revulsion at nuclear weapons and his desire to get rid of them to his aides in the early '80s, he did not go public until his SDI speech in March 1983, when the freeze was at its peak.) The lesson is an old one: profound changes in policy rarely, if ever, occur without intervention by a large, impassioned public movement.

But on other points I must disagree. There is no doubt in my mind that Reagan's commitment to abolition was deep and sincere. This is the unanimous opinion of his aides, many of whom regarded abolition as absurdly naïve and still do. If, as Fried rightly says, SDI scuttled abolition, this could only have happened because Reagan—and Gorbachev—so strongly favored abolition. Let us recall that in the mid-'80s, not even freeze supporters (not to speak of virtually all mainstream politicians) were championing abolition. Reports of Reagan's abolitionist proposals at Reykjavik outraged Democrats as well as Republicans. Senator Sam Nunn, one of the four former officials who now favor abolition, said at the time that if the talks had not fallen apart over SDI, the result would have been "the most painfully embarrassing example of American ineptitude in this century, certainly since World War II." So intense was the criticism that the Administration sought to hide the truth about Reykjavik, as if it were a disgrace. It is only recently, with the declassification of the transcripts, that the depth of Reagan's abolitionism has been revealed.

Acknowledging Reagan's abolitionism is nothing to be feared by antinuclear activists. On the contrary, it is immensely welcome evidence that the cause they have favored since 1945 can cut clean across political lines. It is therefore equally to be welcomed that the quartet of "aging cold war hawks" have revived Reagan's vision. What finally matters is not the company one keeps but the cause one champions.

Today, the nuclear danger is reviving in ever more virulent forms. It is rooting itself in new soil—South Asia, East Asia, the Middle East—without being removed from the soil of the cold war powers, who plan to maintain nuclear arsenals in the thousands in perpetuity and are busy thinking up new missions for them. Yet public awareness of this gathering global danger is close to nil. A few "aging cold war hawks" and an array of antinuclear organizations are seeking to do something about it. Also, in the face of widespread public indifference, they have remained faithful to the cause. But where is the movement on the scale of the freeze movement to move from vision to action? Its absence, not the emergence of abolitionist former cabinet officers, is what should alarm us.

Jonathan Schell

Ron Paul & *Roe v. Wade*

San Mateo, Calif.

I appreciated Christopher Hayes's "Ron Paul's Roots" [Dec. 24]. Paul does appear to be joining the old right libertarians of his ilk with what Murray Rothbard used to call the "big government libertarians" at Cato and the pseudo-libertarians at *Reason*, who seem to put fornication and smoking dope ahead of economics and politics. I do take issue with Hayes that Paul's ideal state will be one that "forces pregnancy." Unless someone's holding a gun on an unwilling couple, no one but the two who create a baby could be so accused. Dr. Paul is a constitutionalist who says *Roe v. Wade* should be overturned, thus returning the matter to the states.

Andrew Fitzgerald

San Diego

"…a stripped-down state (though, oddly, one that still forces pregnancy)…" has me visualizing childless female citizens being rounded up and sent to state-run insemination centers. Needless to say, this is not part of Ron Paul's vision, which is that this difficult issue is not in the jurisdiction of the federal government.

Tom Harvey

Clarification & Correction

In Shahan Mufti's article on Pakistan in the forum "What GWOT Has Wrought" [Dec. 31], it should have said that Benazir Bhutto was being tried in foreign, not international, courts.

The January 7/14 issue should have been designated Volume 286, Number 1.

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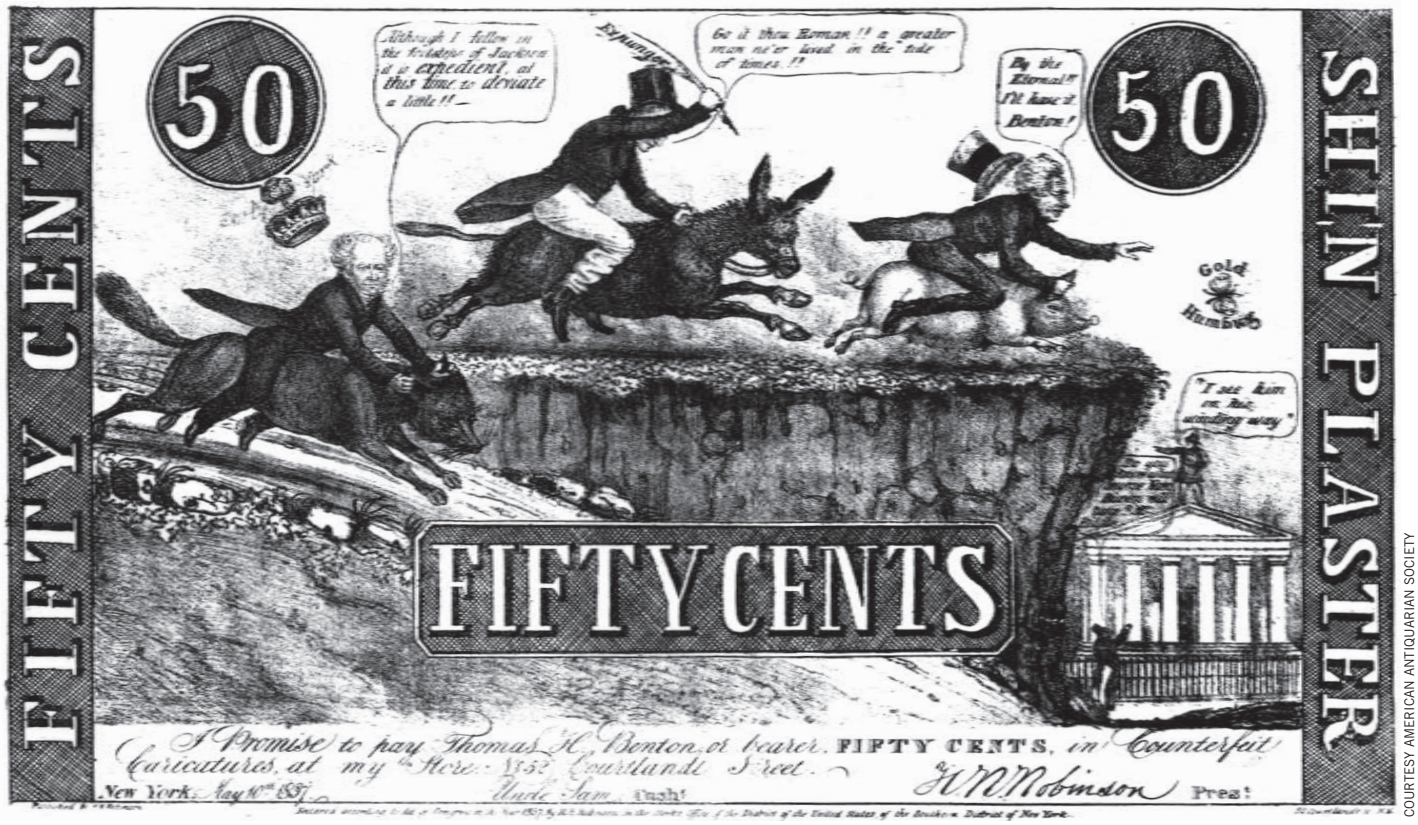
Books & the Arts.


FIFTY CENTS
50
50
SHIN PLASTER
FIFTY CENTS
Although I differ in the Wisdom of Jackson's a measure, at this time to deviate a little!!
Go it thou Roman!! a greater man never lived in the tide of times!!
By the Eternal!! I'll have it Benton!
Gold Humbug
I see him at his old trading way
I Promise to pay Thomas H. Benton or bearer FIFTY CENTS, in Counterfeit Caricatures, at my Store 353 Courtlandt Street.
New York May 10th 1837
Uncle Sam Cash!
W. H. Robinson Pres!

COURTESY AMERICAN ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY

H.R. Robinson's print depicts Andrew Jackson and Senator Thomas Hart Benton chasing the "gold humbug" of counterfeit currency, 1837. Martin Van Buren, left, also advocated hard-money policy.

United We Scam

by STEVE FRASER

In 1849 William Thompson, a man of genteel appearance, was arrested by the New York City police. Compared with several recent big cons—the Enron boondoggle, the subprime mortgage swindle—the scam that got Thompson into trouble with the law was astonishingly simple, and his booty so penny ante that his arrest wouldn't merit a mention in today's tabloids. Thompson persuaded his marks to "lend" him their gold watches as a token of their confidence in him—tokens that, in fact, he had no intention of returning. Back then, however, Thompson's small con became notorious, first in New York City and then throughout the country. Once a mere confidence man, Thompson was touted as "The Confidence Man," and he so relished his celebrity that he scheduled interviews with the press from his cell in the Tombs, Manhattan's notorious municipal prison. One visitor reported that he was led to Thompson's cell by "two country looking individuals. When they arrived at the landing in the second tier, they were accosted by our hero, who sat in the keeper's chair, in this way, 'Gentlemen, have either of you a cigar? I am the *Confidence Man*.'"

Why this media frenzy? At the time of Thompson's arrest, the United States was alive with the spirit of enterprise. Vast lands were being opened to settlement, commercial farming and mercantile undertakings of all sorts. Towns and cities rose up overnight. New turnpikes, canals, bridges, dockyards and railroads gave the market a vast geographical reach. Indeed, it was during the antebellum era that the marketplace first assumed its position as the country's lodestar. Previously most economic transactions had been local. They were conducted between people who knew and trusted each other as family members, neighbors and fellow villagers, who followed long-established routines and relied on barter or tangible pieces of gold and silver as means of exchange. But in Jacksonian America, perfect strangers separated by great distances entered more often and more freely into untried and faintly mysterious kinds of business relations. These new contractual arrangements involved untested technologies, undertakings of unprecedented size like the Erie Canal and risky investments in distant unsettled places like the Ohio Valley. In this new world, one increasingly populated by anonymous, highly mobile, self-interested people, there was nothing more precious than the confidence that these contractual promises would be kept. America was brimming over with confidence. It seemed an indigenous national instinct, a

Sheppard Lee
Written by Himself.
By Robert Montgomery Bird.
New York Review Books. 425 pp. $16.95.

A Nation of Counterfeiters
Capitalists, Con Men, and the Making of the United States.
By Stephen Mihm.
Harvard. 457 pp. $29.95.

Steve Fraser is a writer, editor and senior lecturer in history at the University of Pennsylvania. His new book, Wall Street: America's Dream Palace, *is forthcoming from Yale in April.*

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fervent faith in the notion that Americans could get rich and reinvent themselves while doing it—if one was audacious enough to take the risk of trusting a stranger. Confidence was a form of equality of opportunity open to the bold—Manifest Destiny without all the heavy breathing about democracy and divine election.

Yet even as this new economy expanded, Jacksonian Americans were plagued by a crisis of confidence. What would happen if all these strangers didn't keep their word? What if a land broker's Elysian field turned out to be a malarial swamp? What if your railroad shares entitled you to a stake in nothing but two streaks of rust? What if the canal in which you were an investor was nothing but a fifty-mile-long bone-dry rut? What if a town promoter's map depicting the churches, schools, stores, hotels and theaters of a New Jerusalem in some Midwestern outback was nothing more than a figment of his felonious imagination? More disconcerting still, these dealings inveigled people in an economy lubricated by paper currencies that no one could entirely trust. What if the currency issued by some faraway bank was worth no more than the useless tract of land the banker had recklessly speculated in, leaving not only the bank's depositors high and dry but fleecing everyone else unfortunate enough to hold the bank's paper? What if, indeed? Who do you trust?

During Sheppard's odyssey, maxims about optimism and equality are mocked mercilessly.

During the quarter-century leading up to the Civil War, commonly identified as the takeoff stage of American capitalism, there were several troughs of panic and depression: a prolonged and deep one in 1837, following years of wild land speculation, and another in 1857. That year Herman Melville published *The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade*, perhaps the best known if least read example of a large literature: novels, memoirs, travelogues and plays devoted to exploring the era's crisis of confidence. Melville's gaze, as one might expect, was a coruscating one. In his novel a con artist reappears in different guises—land agent, herb doctor, stock speculator, etc.—aboard a steamboat headed from St. Louis to New Orleans. For Melville, all of American society could be likened to a confidence game, but none of his con artist's marks are the kind of unsuspecting folk whom William Thompson fleeced.

Melville understood that a confidence man's thievery depends on the willing collaboration of his mark, and a successful swindle requires a world of malignant innocence where people harbor the sneaky, illicit belief that fast money can be made by skirting the moral rigors and renunciations of the work ethic. Melville's confidence man meets men on the make whose cupidity and moral slipperiness make them ripe pickings. They are willfully credulous souls in pursuit of their own aggrandizement. Each mark's motivation may be ingenuous, idealistic even; after all, each is merely in a footrace to catch up with the American dream, to realize his own manifest destiny, the New World's promise of limitless opportunity for every man. Still, even the most innocent (that is to say, least calculating) mark approaches the confidence man with a certain foreboding: something feels not quite right; something shady hovers nearby—but that something is very hard to resist. In Melville's eyes, whether in the realm of politics, religion, philosophy, literature, philanthropy or commerce, confidence was a "masquerade," a devil's game, a phenomenon that called into question not only the underlying premise of a market economy but the very moral and existential fabric of the self and society.

Melville's devilish protagonist casts a long shadow, one that falls back past William Thompson—who, some have claimed, was the inspiration for Melville's novel—to the narrator of the memoir *Sheppard Lee, Written by Himself*, published in 1836. Its author, Robert Montgomery Bird, was a doctor and a writer. He was admired by Edgar Allan Poe and collaborated with the period's most famous actor, Edwin Forrest, on several successful plays. *Sheppard Lee*, which Bird published a year before breaking with Forrest, is a rollicking satire about the transmigration of the self in Jacksonian America. During Sheppard's strange odyssey, all of the era's cherished, self-congratulatory maxims about the heroic individual, equality, the work ethic and invincible optimism are mocked mercilessly. Jacksonian democracy comes in for an especially withering comeuppance, perhaps in part because Bird considered himself a Whig.

The offspring of middling farmers in New Jersey, Sheppard quickly fritters away his inheritance, the family homestead, because he is allergic to work—"dull and disagreeable labour." Like many of his neighbors, he has a taste for get-rich-quick schemes but is not cunning enough to stay out of trouble or spot those plotting to take advantage of him. More hapless than roguish, he's utterly lacking in the ambition and energy, not to mention the moral appetite, for hard work that is supposed to animate every red-blooded American. His situation grown dire, he tries to recoup his losses by going into politics. He thinks of it as pure charade, nothing more than inflated invective aimed at banks and aristocrats (he's apparently joined the local Jacksonian Democratic Party), which he parrots eagerly to curry favor. He is cheated out of the spoils of office by cleverer men, and then he blithely joins the opposition party but with no better result.

Creditors hot on his trail, Sheppard, while desperately chasing a rumor about Captain Kid's buried treasure, finds himself dead, but not truly dead. Instead, he is rescued by an act of infernal intervention: he discovers he has the power to transmigrate his soul or spirit, which up to this point has been wandering about the countryside in some hard-to-pin-down disembodied state, into the body of someone recently deceased. After some momentary disorientation, with amazing alacrity Sheppard's spirit settles into the corpse of the deceased Squire Higginson, who, as the devil's justice would have it, had long made a habit of mocking Sheppard's sorry state. The Squire is a man of substance, and Sheppard's mouth waters at the prospect of taking over his wealth and persona.

After inhabiting the Squire, Sheppard reanimates the corpses of a foppish fortune hunter, a usurious miser (clearly Jewish), a Quaker philanthropist, a Virginia slave and a melancholic slave master—a sizable slice of antebellum society. Through all these transformations some fragile residue of Sheppard remains, but even he is struck by how easily he assumes the attitudes, values, passions and idiosyncrasies of each new identity, each from a different walk of life. "What had become of me?" he asks. Sheppard's "memoir" becomes a picaresque meditation on the self and the sacred shibboleths of his age. Rather than symbolizing that rock-solid independent, self-affirming individual so central to the ethos of democratic capitalism, Sheppard's experience suggests that the self melts away into a series of performances staged in the theater of the marketplace. It assembles and disassembles and reassembles from moment to moment. And a self like Sheppard's, one that is essentially ephemeral, more a working hypothesis than a fact, hardly inspires confidence, neither deep down in the individual psyche nor between one self and another. It can also be disorienting to the contemporary reader: is this really a novel of the early nineteenth century? Doesn't all this

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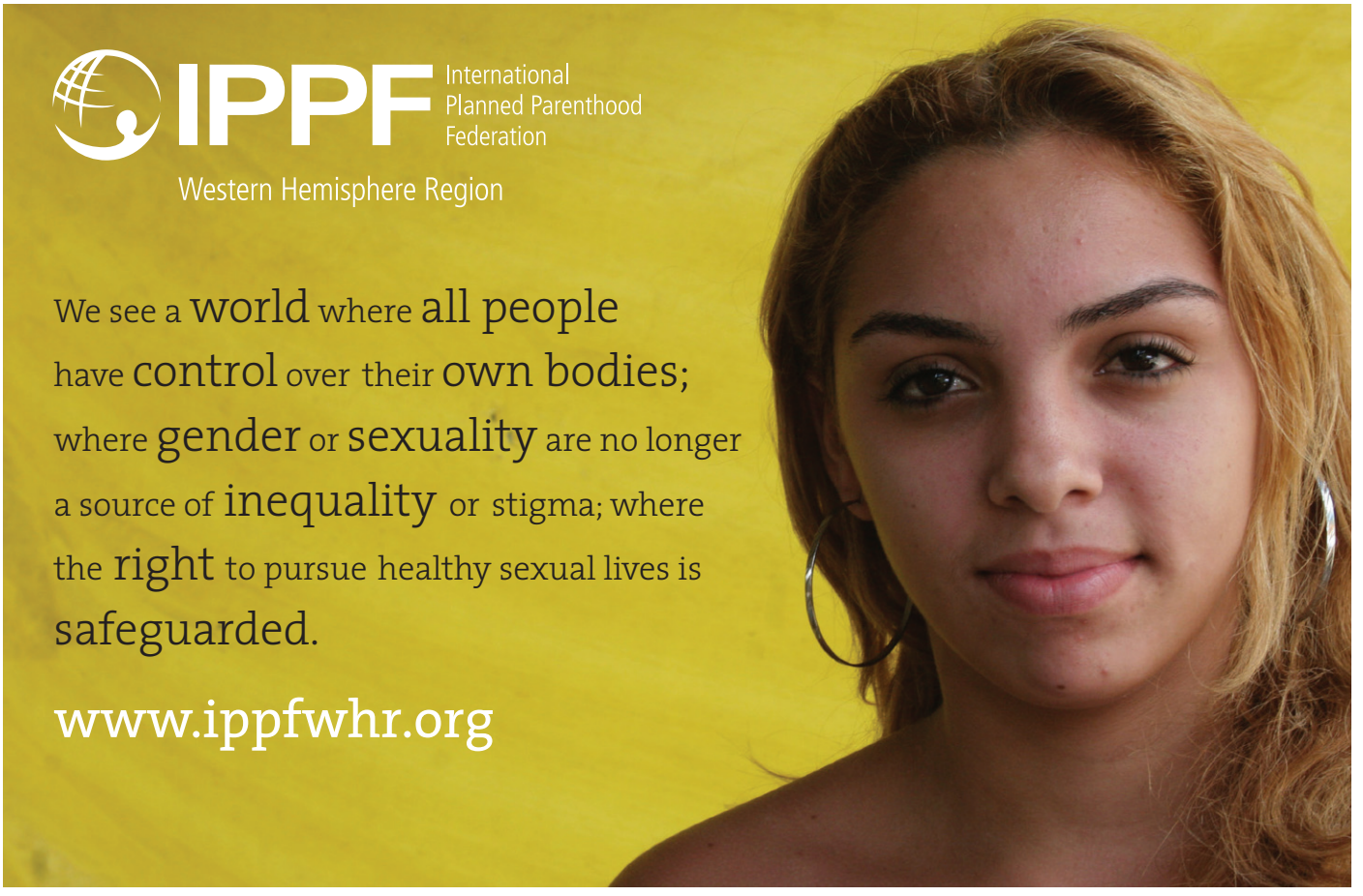
liquefaction of the self express a sensibility more familiar to life in our so-called postmodern era? While the novel is clearly one of its time, Bird's skill as caricaturist, his wit, irony and iconoclasm, lend *Sheppard Lee* an odd contemporary feel.

Why all this shape-shifting, anyway? Why doesn't Sheppard just settle into a prosperous and respected life as Squire Higginson, a Philadelphia "gentleman"? In every transmigration—with one critical exception I will return to in a moment—Sheppard's happiness about his new existence sours into a feeling of discontent from which he longs to escape. Although the pitfalls of each of Sheppard's lives are distinct, his chronic unease is time and again driven by the poisonous quality of his social relationships. There is a high quotient of jealousy, resentment, envy and deception in the novel, most often the bitter fruit of the money-hunger and social pretensions exhibited by Sheppard's "selves" as well as family members, neighbors, competitors, swindlers and con artists. All of this turns the "memoir" into a scathing sendup of social mobility, equality and democracy. Sheppard Lee's memoir is a Tocquevillian black comedy. The chance to leave behind lowly beginnings and rise to something grander—America as the land of second chances—was one of the great promises of Jackson's "Age of the Common Man." However, as Sheppard never fully realizes but Bird (along with Tocqueville) conveys all too well, this race up the mountain breeds a society in which everyone is trying to put one over on others, luring them like "minnows," a world driven by invidious social distinctions that undermine its celebrated egalitarianism.

Sheppard Lee has plenty of telling *aperçus* about this peculiarly American form of what Bird calls variously the "republican aristocratic society," "chip-chop" aristocrats and the "nabobocracy." It's a world of bloated self-importance, of "dash, flash, and splash," full of parvenu strivings and resentments. What counts here is money, perhaps the character of one's profession—preferably something as far away from manual labor as possible—and maybe even what your father did, but no need to trace the roots back further since all American grandfathers "were pretty much alike, and the sooner we forget them the better." Bird has a nice appreciation of the psychosocial and political chemistry that imparts a distinctive *frisson* to this admixture of faux aristocracy and democratic aspiration. The pomp, ostentation and arrogance of the rich, the supercilious airs put on to fend off reminders of the shallowness of their lineages, incite a bitter hostility in the poor, who've been promised equality but receive a fistful of social insult instead. All this "puerile vanity and stolid pride of the genteel and refined" exasperates the lower orders, feeding "mobocracism" and "all other isms of a vulgar stamp." The problem for the newly risen, anxious to put distance between themselves and their lowly beginnings, is that the "cobbler is [a gentleman] or thinks himself so—which is all the same thing in America." Looked at wrong-side out, that sunny vision of equality of opportunity and plebeian democracy that lit up the Jacksonian imagination seems a sham. No one is who he claims to be.

Democracy itself turns vile in the later stages of Sheppard Lee's transmigrations. When he pops into the body of a wealthy Quaker philanthropist (Zachariah Longstraw), Sheppard hopes for an escape from all that devil-take-the-hindmost, self-seeking nastiness into a life of virtue (although he does slyly admit he's game on philanthropy more for the material ease than the virtue). His life as a good Samaritan, however, turns into a nightmare. Giddy with good intentions, Zachariah starts up charities to succor "the suffering poor" while exhorting them to "economy, industry, prudence…and so forth"; tries schemes to "effect a reformation



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in [the] habits and feelings" of "poor wretches in prison"; and establishes schools to "keep the children of the poor out of mischief." But every one of his naïvely conceived and self-righteous acts of do-goodism is received with howls of ingratitude by the objects of his charity: poor working women, criminals, small businessmen down on their luck, embattled marble cutters and shoemakers, even an escaped slave he hides but who then runs off with the family silver.

All that is nothing, however, compared with Sheppard's next comeuppance. He is kidnapped by two slave catchers who, fresh out of slaves, intend to sell him down South as an abolitionist, ripe for lynching. Of course Sheppard is not an abolitionist…but then again, nobody is what they seem to be, and he'll do. His captors do a bang-up public-relations job of inventing and inflating his abolitionist credentials; indeed, they do their job too well and democracy takes care of the rest. Although our brigands want to sell Sheppard in Louisiana, where abolitionists command top dollar, they get only as far as an election rally in Virginia, which Bird uses to provide a wicked portrait of the mob, and Jacksonian democracy, in full frenzy. Their blood up, these white male citizens are ready for rough justice right there and then, and they don't plan on paying for it either. In a hilarious scene the kidnappers appeal to the sanctity of private property—that is, their "ownership" of the philanthropist Sheppard—but the mob isn't buying it. Riled up by a thunderclap of fatuous democratic bluster about the sanctity of The People, they set off to do away with him.

Sheppard manages to escape by transporting himself into the body of a dead slave, and being a slave turns out to be the only incarnation that Sheppard finds inherently satisfying. At first he can hardly believe it himself. Up to this point he has invariably opted for identities (or rather stolen them; we might call him a master of identity theft) that promised some improvement in his social condition. Now the process has been reversed, and out of desperation, he finds himself at the very bottom, the despised dead end of the social hierarchy. Yet wondrous strange, he and his fellow slaves are utterly content. Indeed, only as a slave does Sheppard entirely lose touch with his former self, his "Sheppardness." Christopher Looby's introduction to *Sheppard Lee* notes the racism of these passages, about which there can be no doubt. Sheppard—whose slave name is, of course, Tom—and his mates are perfect Sambo types: happy-go-lucky, childlike, slow-witted and loyal unto death to a master as all-caring as our father who art in heaven. It is the book's most unsettling invention, an inadvertent reminder of the identity theft that occurred beyond the confines of its plot.

According to Looby, Bird considered but ultimately abandoned a wide variety of scenarios for Sheppard's masquerades. One would have had him reincarnate as a counterfeiter. I suspect this would come as no surprise to Stephen Mihm, whose *A Nation of Counterfeiters* is a brilliant description of a time—Sheppard Lee's time—in American history that seems at once distant and familiar. Mihm's book is a lucid history of counterfeiting in antebellum America, that dark art's golden age, so to speak. Mihm's central subject is the transubstantiation of money, and his and Bird's books together make up a devil's dictionary of a burgeoning market society, its vaunted individualism and of capitalism as a kind of necromancy.

Like any ordinary business, counterfeiting concerned itself with marketing and distribution.

At the outset of his book Mihm conveys the elemental strangeness of this era. Until the Civil War there was no national currency, no dollar issued by the federal government and used by everybody. Instead, there were dozens of currencies issued by state banks, railroads, canal and mining companies, and other enterprises, some used only in particular locales, many others flowing freely across state borders, from region to region. (Mihm's book is full of striking illustrations of these monies, and someone ought to mount them as an exhibition, for they comprise colorful depictions of the nation in all its workday busyness and allegorical richness, and testify to the artfulness of their skilled commercial engravers.) All these paper currencies were a good thing too. How else would this newly emerging and rambunctious market economy lubricate all the transactions people were dying to make? The demand for more money, new money, coins but especially cash that required only a printing press to reproduce in abundance (no arduous discovering and mining of precious metals), became virtually limitless during the boom years of the 1820s and '30s, and again after the country recovered from the collapse of the land boom in 1837 and the terrible depression that followed.

But this multitude of paper was also a bad thing. No one was minding the store. State banks, the main source of this great pandemonium of money, were chartered by their respective state governments, but the charters were essentially licenses to print because they contained no provisions for ongoing public oversight to ensure that the banks had assets on hand (gold especially) to back the notes they issued. There was even less supervision, if that's possible, of the script issued by railroad, mining and other industrial corporations. These currencies were often not worth the paper they were printed on. They might as well have been counterfeit. And there was the rub: if what passed for legal tender was often scarcely distinguishable from funny money, what was a commercial society resting on confidence to do?

Counterfeiters knew what to do, and they did a land-office business. Flourishing especially in border areas—the Vermont-Canadian backwoods was the main site of the industry's early period—where law enforcement, such as it was, was weakly developed (here and there counterfeiters were known to hold down day jobs as sheriffs or magistrates) and compromised by overlapping governmental jurisdictions, counterfeiting grew steadily in scope, geographic reach and organizational complexity. Like any ordinary business, it concerned itself with credit arrangements, finding reliable suppliers of raw materials, quality control, the supply of skilled labor, competitive rivalries, marketing and distribution. As the economy at large began to industrialize, so too did counterfeiting; technological innovations in engraving and printing made the counterfeiters' product more sophisticated and harder to spot. The industry also took advantage of the dispossession of skilled artisan engravers and printers, whose small workshops had been driven under by larger firms, to recruit its own labor and "sales force." The latter often consisted of casual and unemployed workers who became the industry's "shovers," passing on fake notes to unsuspecting storekeepers.

Yet counterfeiting was not simply an enterprise like any other. Mihm acutely notes that by bringing back to life the casualties of legitimate capitalism—ruined banks, unemployed engravers, dead currencies, discarded machinery—counterfeiting performed a kind of necromancy. Consequently the whole monetary system lived in a chronic state of anarchy as the anxiety about what should count as real value and what should not produced what Mihm calls a "categorical collapse," a sense of vertigo further undermining confidence in the "real" economy. This nurtured the growth of an urban capitalist demimonde inhabited by all

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sorts, an underclass of the semi-employed, drifters, upper-crust slummers, young clerks looking to escape their day jobs and of course criminal types, including confidence men, who made a mockery of all the cardinal virtues of bourgeois life. Counterfeiters moved among them. They became noxious to respectable society but heroes elsewhere in this capitalist dream world of easy money.

Theirs was not the prudential capitalism of the Protestant work ethic but rather the predatory, underground capitalism of the English sea dog, indifferent to the law, risk-prone in the pursuit of overnight wealth. And like those sea dogs, counterfeiters were the cultivators of a certain romantic aura. Mihm reports on how some of the better-known counterfeiters enjoyed reputations as lovable rogues who sported ruffled shirt fronts, gold watches and fob chains, the flashy regalia of this magical capitalism. They also fancied themselves exemplars of democratic self-invention. Stephen Burroughs, one of the most celebrated counterfeiters, proudly proclaimed in his memoir, "I am so far a republican, that I consider a man's merit to rest entirely with himself, without any regard to family, blood, or connection."

Their many victims, among them shopkeepers and legions of ordinary customers, naturally loathed them. A whole counter-industry of counterfeit detectors emerged, its main commodity being regularly updated guides to counterfeit currency, which many a storekeeper kept close by his side as he conducted his daily business. But even the detectors had a self-interest in a thriving counterfeit industry, since without it they would have been out of work, which Mihm observes made counterfeit guides less than reliable. Moreover, because the line between real and bogus currency was so hazy, legitimate banks were ripe for extortion by "detectors" who could easily ruin their reputations. What a world—like Melville's, like Sheppard's, like ours. Who can you trust?

Mihm explains that the particular dilemma of counterfeit currency was solved by the financial exigencies of the Civil War. The need to raise capital and pay soldiers compelled the Union to do what the Constitution had always empowered the federal government to do: issue a single national currency good as "legal tender for all debts public and private." Greenbacks, mainly denominated as five-dollar bills, went into circulation in the summer of 1861. Their appearance was also meant to restore confidence in the future of the national government and the financial underpinnings of the economy. Although God is now duly noted as the ultimate object of trust on the back of dollar bills, in the early days of the greenbacks real trust rested in the power and moral authority of the Union as it survived its most traumatic test and honored its pledge to make good on the paper issued in its name. Henceforth counterfeiting could be likened, at least metaphorically, to treason, and its golden age ended.

Nagging questions remain, however, questions that strike deep into the murkier regions explored by Melville and Bird and shadow the present as much as they did the days of Andrew Jackson. If capitalism is by its nature a game of confidence, at what point does speculation, the beating heart of capitalist investment and innovation, dissolve into pure chicanery, a kind of economic alchemy or gambling with loaded dice? Are fictitious value and slippery selves the currency of a normal market society, not merely its criminal underworld? Mihm might say no, so long as you have a watchman on duty—in this case a federal Treasury with the sole authority to issue and police a uniform national currency. Melville, Bird and a man named James Gordon Bennett would have disagreed. Bennett, the William Randolph Hearst of the antebellum era, was the publisher of the *New York Herald*, and he used the occasion of William Thompson's arrest to editorialize about society's true confidence men. Bennett was brutally, even demagogically, direct. Thompson was a petty swindler, he wrote, but "those palazzos" of the rich, "with all their costly furniture and all their splendid equipages, have been the product of the same genius in their proprietors, which made the 'Confidence Man' immortal and a prisoner at 'the Tombs.' His genius has been employed on a small scale in Broadway. Theirs has been employed in Wall Street.… Long life to the real 'Confidence Man'—the 'Confidence Man' of Wall Street—the 'Confidence Man' of the palace uptown."

Bennett would feel at home today. Everything is as he left it. ■

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The view at Alexandria, Virginia, circa 1865

Battle Pieces

by ERIC FONER

This Republic of Suffering
Death and the American Civil War.
By Drew Gilpin Faust.
Knopf. 346 pp. $27.95.

One of the most arresting lectures I have ever heard at a historians' convention was delivered four years ago by Drew Gilpin Faust at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association. Taking as her starting point Robert E. Lee's possibly apocryphal remark, "It is well that war is so terrible—lest we should grow too fond of it," Faust blamed historians for succumbing to war's seductive power. By ascribing moral purposes and profound causes to what is really pointless slaughter, she insisted, historians obscure war's horror. Exhibit A was the American Civil War. More than 60,000 books dealing in one way or another with that conflict have been published since it ended, she observed. That's an average of more than one per day. If historians need war to add drama to their grand narratives, Faust suggested, then war, if it is to be more than pointless slaughter, very much needs historians.

Faust, of course, is best known today as the first woman president of Harvard University in its 371-year history. (She was inaugurated in October.) But before reaching this milestone, she established a reputation as a leading scholar of nineteenth-century Southern history. Indeed, one of her more recent books, *Mothers of Invention* (1996), accom-

Eric Foner, DeWitt Clinton Professor of History at Columbia University, is the author of many books, including, most recently, Forever Free: The Story of Emancipation and Reconstruction.

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plished something nearly impossible—coming up with a genuinely new explanation for Confederate defeat. Faust attributed it to the withdrawal of support by women on the Southern home front, who abandoned the fight because of the damage the war was inflicting on their families and on traditional gender relations. Now, with *This Republic of Suffering*, a work by turns fascinating, innovative and obsessively morbid, Faust returns to the task of stripping from war any lingering romanticism, nobility or social purpose.

Faust begins by reminding us of the Civil War's appalling harvest of death. In a nation of 31 million people, 620,000 died as members of the Union or Confederate armed forces, a total nearly equal to the deaths in all other American wars combined, and the equivalent of 6 million in terms of today's population. This figure does not include the thousands of civilians who became collateral victims of battles or who perished in disease-ridden camps for runaway slaves or in internecine conflict between Unionist and Confederate families that raged in parts of the South. The slaughter of the young could not be assimilated into the cultural ideal that Faust calls the Good Death—the passing at home of a man or woman of advanced age, surrounded by family members and imparting last words of religious and social wisdom.

Faust strips from the Civil War any lingering romanticism, nobility or social purpose.

Of course, untimely death was hardly unknown in mid-nineteenth-century America, given the primitive state of medicine. During the course of his life, for example, Abraham Lincoln lost a baby brother and two sons to disease and saw his sister die in childbirth. But the scale of loss in the Civil War dwarfed anything in the American experience. And unlike today, when the government carefully shields images of the war dead from public view, the new art of photography, in the words of one newspaper, "brought the bodies and laid them in our dooryards." Drawing on a wide range of sources, including sermons, memoirs, newspapers, poetry and soldiers' letters, Faust probes how Americans tried to cope with mass death and how the experience affected everything from business practices to religious attitudes, literary culture and the organization of the state.

In some ways, Faust points out, death was good for business. Transportation companies, North and South, made tidy profits bringing the remains of soldiers home for burial. Embalmers operated near the battlefields, preserving bodies and then demanding payment from grieving families. Entrepreneurs promised, for a fee, to locate information about missing loved ones. A burgeoning market developed in mourning attire made from various fabrics with names unrecognizable today: bareges, challies, balzerines. There were elaborate rules, for the upper classes at least, about how to remain part of fashionable society while in mourning. Faust even takes note of the extensive sales of the "planchette," a kind of Ouija board that supposedly enabled the living to communicate with the dead.

War, Randolph Bourne would write during World War I, "is the health of the state." One of the most profound changes wrought by the Civil War was the creation of a powerful national government, evidenced by the mobilization of economic resources, conscription, the issuance of the first national currency and the emancipation, by presidential decree, Congressional action and constitutional amendment, of more than 4 million slaves. Coping with death, Faust shows, also required unprecedented state action, from notifying next of kin to accounting for the dead and missing. The Union and Confederacy established elaborate systems for gathering statistics and maintaining records of dead and wounded soldiers, efforts supplemented by private philanthropic organizations.

After the war ended, Washington embarked on what Faust calls "the most elaborate federal program undertaken in nearly a century of American nationhood": the location and reburial of hundreds of thousands of Union soldiers in national military cemeteries. The scale of death in engagements like Shiloh, Antietam, Gettysburg and many others was so vast that many bodies lay untended for days, eventually buried in unidentified shallow graves near the battlefield. Between 1865 and 1871, the federal government reinterred more than 300,000 Union (but not Confederate) soldiers, including black ones, buried, as they had fought, in segregated sections of military cemeteries. Faust points out that officials seeking to locate the remains of deceased Union soldiers often found that they had been buried, and their graves cared for, by local African-Americans in the South.

If the mass death of the Civil War "demanded an explanation," Americans increasingly found one in religion. The pre-Socratic philosopher Xenophanes first pointed out that man creates God in his own image. The same is true of heaven. Of course, equating death with eternal life was a central tenet of Christianity. But mass death, Faust argues, led to a "transformation of heaven," as Americans imagined celestial family reunions that seemed more and more like decorous gatherings in Victorian living rooms. "I don't like Paradise," the poet Emily Dickinson jested, in response to this domestication of heaven, "Because it's Sunday—all the time." Some Americans could not wait until their own death to see the departed. Spiritualism—belief in the ability to communicate with the dead—proliferated. Mary Todd Lincoln held séances in the White House to experience again the presence of her young son Willie, who succumbed to disease in 1862.

But religion also gave a larger meaning to wartime sacrifice. What Faust calls "the United States's new and elevated sense of destiny" emerged from the war, a belief that God had willed the conflict to purge the nation of the sin of slavery, and that America's manifest destiny to serve as a worldwide embodiment of freedom had been hallowed by all the blood that had been shed. Lincoln, in his magnificent second inaugural address, invoked biblical language to explain the war but warned that ultimately God's will cannot be known by man: "The Almighty has His own purposes." The North's Protestant clergy had no such doubts. To them, God's purposes were clear, and the soldiers' deaths merged with the Union's triumph in what Faust calls a "consoling narrative of divine purpose and sacrifice." The dead had not died in vain.

Faust sees this providential view of the war as essentially a device to make sense of pointless slaughter. In a chapter on the way American writers responded to the bloodshed, she gives pride of place to Dickinson, Ambrose Bierce and Herman Melville, each of whom tried, through ironic detachment, to "undeceive" readers by stripping the war of comfortable, exalted meaning. The short stories by Bierce, who had seen action in numerous battles, including Shiloh, as a member of the Union army, stripped various kinds of wartime death—battlefield, suicide, execution—of any romantic meaning. Melville's poetry collection *Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War* rejected the idea that the war had served a glorious purpose. For Faust too, war remains, as it was in her 2004 lecture, meaningless violence.

Except, that is, for the more than 200,000 black men who served in the Union army and navy. Faust notes the special dangers black soldiers confronted. The Confederacy viewed

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them not as legitimate soldiers but as rebellious slaves (unlawful combatants, to use a current phrase). "We cannot treat negroes… as prisoners of war without a destruction of the social system for which we contend," one Southern newspaper declared. Many atrocities took place in which black soldiers were massacred after surrendering, most infamously at Fort Pillow, Tennessee, where nearly 200 perished at the hands of Southern soldiers under the command of Maj. Gen. Nathan Forrest. Nor were white officers of black troops spared; and Confederates did not return their bodies to the Union army for proper burial, as they did for other officers.

"Black soldiers," Faust writes, "approached war's violence differently from white Americans." They saw the war as a righteous struggle against slavery, offering not only spiritual redemption but an equal place in American society. The struggle for freedom gave the war a "special meaning" for blacks.

But her treatment of black soldiers stands in sharp contrast to her account of the white combatants, Northern and Southern. They regularly wrote home of service to nation, God and their comrades; yet Faust seems to see in such sentiments little more than a rationalization of violence that gives it a nationalist and Christian overlay. Indeed, her chapter on white soldiers' response to death mixes letters by Union and Confederate soldiers to show the essential sameness of their responses. Here she diverges from Chandra Manning's *What This Cruel War Was Over* (2007), an examination of soldiers' letters that demonstrates that as time went on, more and more Union soldiers saw the war as a struggle over the future of slavery in a nation dedicated to freedom. For Faust, pointless violence and mass death compelled Americans to seek meaning in the war; for Manning, what led Northerners and Southerners to be willing to lay down their lives was a meaningful difference in essential values.

All history, the saying goes, is contemporary history. Current concerns affect the questions we ask of the past and, frequently, the answers we find. The Civil War offers a striking example. During the 1930s and '40s, in part because of a revulsion against what they saw as the needless slaughter of World War I, historians presented the Civil War not as an irrepressible conflict between two societies with fundamentally different systems of labor and social outlooks but as an unnecessary struggle brought on by a blundering generation of politicians. In the aftermath of World War II, historians reinterpreted the Civil War in light of the struggle against fascism and a growing civil rights consciousness. Refracted through the lens of those experiences, the moral was clear: if it was

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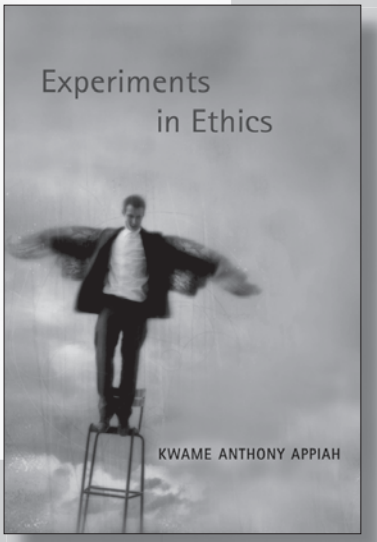

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worth a war to destroy the Third Reich, it was worth one to rid the nation of slavery.

Today, war has taken on a different aspect, and historians have followed suit. Like Faust's book, *Upon the Altar of the Nation* (2006), a work by the Yale scholar of religious history Harry Stout, condemns the Civil War clergy for justifying slaughter. It is hard not to see the shadow of Iraq—a prime example of senseless carnage cynically overlaid with exalted rhetoric—hovering over these books. And at a time of the increasing militarization of our society and politics, any reminder of the true costs of war is certainly welcome.

Yet on the question of whether the Civil War had any larger meaning, *This Republic of Suffering* is oddly agnostic. At one point, Faust does refer to "a war about slavery." But overall, the war's meaning for her lies in death, not life; in destruction and suffering, not any other outcome. The Civil War was, indeed, a terrible tragedy. But because of her unrelenting preoccupation with death, Faust strips the war of political meaning. She never steps back to ask what the price of avoiding war might have been.

A look at the unsuccessful "compromise" proposals advanced in Congress during the secession winter of 1860–1861 suggests that war could have been averted only at a very high cost, if not in lives then in the nature of American society itself. To try to bring the South back into the Union, these plans included, among other things, a ban on Northern criticism of Southern institutions, a Southern veto on national policies and the recognition of slavery as a permanent feature of American life. What about letting the "erring sisters depart in peace," as Horace Greeley, editor of the *New York Tribune*, advocated? Confederate leaders were bent on expanding their slave-based empire into Mexico and the Caribbean. Either way—a compromise settlement or peaceable disunion—the United States and, indeed, the entire Western Hemisphere would be very different today if the Civil War had not taken place. In other words, the price of peace would have been a different harvest of death—the death of freedom of speech, political democracy and any hope for an end to slavery. ■

COURTESY PARAMOUNT VANTAGE

Daniel Day-Lewis as Daniel Plainview in Paul Thomas Anderson's *There Will Be Blood*

A Hard Man

by STUART KLAWANS

Film

By the time the boy lies moaning on the floor, spooned against a father who is helpless to soothe him, the earth has blasted open, fire has whooshed up through an oil derrick and a dozen roustabouts, dwarfed by their handiwork, have raced in all directions across the stony Central California hilltop, trying to contain the immense forces they'd set loose. When at last they could do no more than wait, some had stood silhouetted before the tower of flame, marveling as it raged against an indigo sky. Others had watched from a distance, the glow flickering over their faces, while greasy black clouds spread into lingering daylight to the west. After night fell, around the time the derrick toppled, the boss's assistant had asked if the boy was all right. "No," the boss had calmly said of his son, "he's not," then went on watching the fire. All this, to a clattering on the soundtrack like a gamelan of pots, pans and mixing bowls, beating out insistent variations on lub-dub; and still the gargantuan sequence wasn't over. A fresh day had to break, and wagons loaded with dynamite shoved into the mouth of the fire, before Daniel Plainview could at last lie on the floor of his shack, to caress and restrain his damaged son.

Grim and gleeful, mechanistic and demonic, this tremendous set piece stands out as the most elaborate segment in Paul Thomas Anderson's *There Will Be Blood* but is only one of the film's half-dozen great dramatic eruptions. All of them are instantly recognizable as classic. Each is distinct in setting and style: the Wild West showdown, filmed in a panoramic sweep beside a rising lake of oil; the faith-healing service, in which the camera tracks a preacher's dance back and forth through his pine box of a church; the scene of Daniel Plainview's public humiliation, shot in steady, pitiless close-up beneath a cross of sunlight; the final confrontation between Plainview and his son, executed as an intricate pattern of cross-cutting within an office that's all carved mahogany and shadows. There's even a mad scene that rivals the big oil-strike sequence for virtuosity and violence, despite being shot with just two actors within a basement bowling alley.

You have, of course, seen other movies about the lawless West and the making of American fortunes. You've seen Charles Foster Kane, self-isolated and half-mad, tearing up his Xanadu. (You might as well know: that's where this is going.) But in the aptly titled *There Will Be Blood*, Anderson tells the familiar story not as he's received it from earlier films (much as he's studied them) or even from his putative source, Upton Sinclair's 1927 novel *Oil!*, but as a kind of social realist peyote vision. Utterly fluid yet coming at you in flashes, based on events of a century ago yet intensely present, the film seems as tangible as its desert hills and steam-powered machines but as unfathomable as Daniel Plainview: a rumbling abyss of a man, who will tell you he doesn't like to explain himself.

In this, as in other ways, he is true to the historic character of America's self-made men. As Eric Hobsbawm wrote of the nineteenth century's industrial millionaires, "None had noticeable scruples or could afford to have in an economy and an age where fraud, bribery, slander and if necessary guns were normal aspects of competition. All were hard men, and most would have regarded the question whether they were honest as considerably less relevant to their affairs than the question whether they were smart."

Though Plainview makes his great strike a little later than Hobsbawm's subjects, in 1911, he too is a hard man, who will stake a mining claim even at the expense of dragging his smashed bones across a landscape of bleached rocks; a lying man, who despite his roughneck past affects a gentleman's cooing, round-voweled manner to tell "plain-spoken" truths, which aren't; a ruthlessly smart man, who knows of no graver insult than "fool" and is at his most dangerous

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when he finds he's been played for one.

Where he breaks from type—a departure that makes all the difference to the film—is in his disgust at that cruelest of hoodwinkers: the man of God. The old robber barons could abide the forms of religion when necessary, here dropping an endowment into a strategically advantageous church, there nodding to a sermon that blessed the accumulation of capital. But as much as Plainview aspires to hypocrisy, his one irrepressible, honest impulse is a physical revulsion toward the Almighty and His spokespersons. Reality to Plainview comes down to mechanics, and mechanics in his experience always threatens to become a chain of catastrophes: pulleys that malfunction at the worst moment, beams and hardware that fail to support enough weight, heavy drill bits that slip loose and fall until stopped by somebody's skull. So in this universe of accident and calculation, it must be one more damned trick of chance when Plainview comes snooping for oil in Little Boston, California, his boy H.W. in tow, and winds up negotiating for mineral rights with smooth-faced Eli Sunday, a goat farmer's son who has founded the Church of the Third Revelation.

Sunday, too, is self-made in his way, having anointed himself the evangelist of a new gospel that apparently is still coming in. That this young promoter bargains over the price of a lease doesn't much bother Plainview, who expects as much in business and also expects to win. But the oilman rips himself away with barely concealed anger when Sunday tries to seal the transaction by clasping his hand in prayer. That's too ambitious; that presumes Plainview could be merged into a cozy fellowship ruled by another man's say-so. Never mind that Plainview himself delivers orations on friendship, family and community when he's speaking in public, to sell his services or smooth the way for his operations. In private, he trusts and loves no one but H.W.; and when his relationship with the boy is ruptured—call it fate or another catastrophe of mechanics—Plainview's scorn for Eli Sunday turns into violent hostility.

For all its detailed attention to the building of an industrial fortune—the competition to acquire property, the management of men and equipment, the drive to control both production and transport—*There Will Be Blood* develops into a contest of wills between Plainview and Sunday, and so resolves unexpectedly into an argument about faith. Or, to judge from the malefic exuberance of the final scene, perhaps it's an argument against faith.

So where, you might ask, is the revolution? Admirers of *Oil!* and *Nation* readers may be disappointed to find that Anderson has chucked out the people's soviets, along with the rest of the novel's politics: the labor agitation, the factional debates, the translation of generational conflict into class struggle. If *There Will Be Blood* had pretended to give an accurate picture of its era, this would have been a fatal omission.

But few things can be as useless as a historical drama of historical interest—which is what Anderson would have risked making had he incorporated material that's wholly outside the experience of most of today's viewers. Instead, he's reasonably used his period characters to suggest contemporary political meanings. In Plainview's speeches, you hear a forecast of the present-day public entrepreneur, with his promises that the market (meaning himself) will shower bread, sunshine and good schools wherever he makes a buck; while in Sunday's preaching, you hear the voice of every modern fundamentalist election-broker who declares that Jesus alone (meaning himself) can set our society right.

In reality, as you may have observed, these two figures have been allied for decades. Anderson's twist is to set them against each other, in an imaginative reordering of society so radical that it almost qualifies as political in itself. He distorts history, the source novel and your sense of the contemporary scene. And what do you get in exchange? Just the invigoration of seeing God and Mammon going for each other's throat.

Of course, if Plainview and Sunday were allegorical, there would be no satisfaction in the spectacle. The antagonists have to be fleshed-out vessels of the promised blood; and so I come to Daniel Day-Lewis's performance as Plainview.

You can see how Day-Lewis pieced together the outward elements of the characterization: the slight stoop and limp that testify to old injuries suffered in the pit; the huffing and wheezing that suggest years of breathing rock dust and oil fumes; the grand, baritonal way of forming words, which Plainview must have copied from the era's classiest stump speakers; the habit of pausing and working his jaw, which betrays the agitation simmering beneath every show of patience. Other actors, too, could have figured out such signs. Day-Lewis establishes them and then makes you forget their presence, much as you ignore the scaffolding of the oil derrick once the forces of nature come blasting through. The emotion that Day-Lewis taps seems so spontaneous, and so volcanic, that his performance ought to be listed in the end credits as a special effect, along with the computer-generated imagery used for the fiery gusher. Even here, of course, there must have been calculation. I imagine that in preparing the performance, Day-Lewis might have worked backward from his biggest moments, planning when to hint at restrained fury, when to release a note

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of sarcasm or contempt and when to let loose an outburst, always increasing the magnitude toward the climax in the final scene. But this still says nothing about the complexity of the characterization—for example, the way Plainview will pet and imprison H.W. in a single gesture—or the wonderful paradox of an actor's displaying such power while being attentive to everyone else in the scene. Instead of blowing away his fellow players, Day-Lewis makes them all better by the sheer intensity of his focus on them. To mention only the most obvious case: the admirable Paul Dano, who could have played Eli Sunday opposite any Plainview and been memorable, meets the challenge in Day-Lewis's eyes and makes himself uncanny.

If there had to be one word for *There Will Be Blood*, in fact, I suppose "uncanny" would do. The score, composed by Jonny Greenwood of Radiohead (with a major assist from Johannes Brahms), wraps you in a brooding, unnerving, exhilarating atmosphere in which massed strings can swarm like uneasy flies or shriek like a siren. The cinematography, by Robert Elswit, confronts you with a high, desolate terrain that sometimes, in the shifting light and color, resembles a crouched and breathing beast. Plainview wants nothing to do with the otherworldly, and given the screenplay's construction, he emphatically gets the final word on that subject; but the sounds and images contradict him.

There was something uncanny as well in the season's other downward-spiraling western, *No Country for Old Men*—that Calvinist horror show stalked by Javier Bardem as God's own bogeyman. Why the Coen brothers should believe in the total depravity of humankind and the need for grace (withheld more often than given), I really don't know; but they turned this worldview into an exceptionally well-made movie. It's so immaculate, it will provoke anxiety in you for two hours straight without so much as mussing your hair.

There Will Be Blood, by contrast, is flamboyant rather than immaculate, not just well made but brilliantly and intuitively expressive; and it leaves you feeling shaken but also a little stronger. Maybe Plainview wins his argument against faith, but he loses a deeper argument with H.W.—one about trust and kindness. His loss; your gain. ■

AP IMAGES

Boogaloo Nights

by OLIVER WANG

Since the 1960s, Latin music legend Joe Bataan has played venues from East Harlem to East Berlin, but sometimes even he can be surprised by a new audience. Last June he headlined a show in a trendy Brooklyn club near the Manhattan Bridge, where he was backed by Bronx River Parkway, a multiracial band made up of Latin aficionados, most of them four decades his junior. Bataan described the mostly white and Asian-American crowd as "a lot of hippies" until he was gently corrected: "Oh, I meant hipsters."

Bataan might as well get used to it. Though he still draws crowds of middle-aged fans who grew up on his unique blend of sweet soul singing and Afro-Cuban rhythms, a younger generation is rediscovering the Latin boogaloo sound that Bataan found fame with. Born somewhere between Chicago and New York, between black and brown, the music's initial era burned bright but briefly—yet forty years later, the boogaloo is back.

The very term "boogaloo" invokes a sensation of something both familiar and exotic, slick with lubricious grooves and a punch of funk. It began as a dance but with no set steps or patterns. Dancing the boogaloo was about letting loose in whatever way possible—tossed heads, flailing limbs, kicking feet and all. Little wonder that musicians would find ways of translating that kinetic energy into rhythm. According to lore, in 1965 the Detroit R&B duo of Robert "Tom" Tharpe and Jerry "Jerrio" Murray attended a hop sponsored by Herb "Kool Gent" Kent, a DJ from Chicago's WVON. There, they saw black teenagers performing a frenzied, energetic dance. When they asked its name, the teens replied it was from Spanish Harlem and called the boogaloo.

Tom and Jerrio recorded a seven-inch titled "Boo-Ga-Loo," a thunderous, proto-funk jam filled with rumbling drums, swinging hand claps and vaguely salacious grunts and yells. The song was an instant hit, rocketing to more than a million sales, and immediately inspired a series of boogaloo-themed songs in R&B and jazz, ranging from A.C. Reed's scorching funk single "Boogaloo Tramp" to the freewheeling grooves of the Jazz Crusaders' "Ooga-Boo-Ga-Loo."

Like the dance that inspired it, boogaloo in the R&B and jazz worlds were freestyles, with no set formula. Notably though, for a music fad inspired by a dance purportedly from Spanish Harlem, these boogaloos bore no discernible Latin influences. It wasn't until the boogaloo returned home to New York in 1966 that it acquired a Latin *sabor*, one intermeshed in both African-American and Latin-American rhythmic traditions.

There's little agreement over who transformed the R&B boogaloo into the Latin *bugalú*, but the first to market its name was probably Brooklyn bandleader Ricardo "Richie" Ray. On his 1966 album *Se Soltó*, Ray prominently announced the debut of the "bugaloo," a Latin rhythm that he described as a "PHunky cha cha." For Ray, the bugaloo meant more than just a new style; his liner notes also proclaim that it was "the first real bridge" to bring Latin and African-American dance and music styles together. Ray's was a bold claim but not particularly accurate. Jazz had already served as a crossroads of exchange for black and Latin music, beginning as early as Dizzy Gillespie and Machito's Afro-Cuban suites of the 1940s. By the early '60s, there were any number of big R&B/Latin crossover hits, especially the slinky 1963 remake of Herbie Hancock's "Watermelon Man" by Cuban master percussionist Mongo Santamaria.

What made *bugalú* different was as much generational as it was musical. The players who led the movement were an emergent cadre of "Nuyoricans," New York–born and –raised Puerto Ricans. They came of age in and around working-class black and Latino

Oliver Wang writes about pop music, culture and politics and hosts Soul-Sides.com.

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neighborhoods, in a musical polyglot where the honeyed doo-wop sounds of Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers were as resonant as Tito Puente's spirited mambos. When mambo's crown venue, the Palladium Ballroom, closed in 1966, *bugalú* was already rising to provide the next big thing.

The clarion call came with the 1966 single "Bang Bang," by the Joe Cuba Sextet. Headed by veteran *conguero* Cuba and his "velvet"-voiced singer Jimmy Sabater, the Sextet built "Bang Bang" around a hammering piano riff that leads into a series of loud hand claps and a chorus of beeps and sighs, and climaxes with a nonsensical hook of "Bang! Bang!" Outside a few random Latin culinary references (*lechon!*), the song had no real songwriting, but its propulsive energy and memorable chants transcended culture and language. "Bang Bang" was a massive success, charting more than a million copies and all but kickstarting the *bugalú* craze. Within months, *bugalú* bands had all but taken over New York's Latin dance halls and radio playlists.

The sound's colorful flair and spirit of self-invention were matched in the new personalities who rode its initial wave. The self-proclaimed *el rey* (king) of *bugalú*, Pete Rodriguez, depicting himself as a swinging '60s bachelor on his record covers, scored two immense hits, "I Like It Like That" and "Oh, That's Nice!" Contrasting with Rodriguez's dapper playboy image was the brooding, gangster-obsessed Willie Colón. The future megastar of salsa was only 17 when he cut *bugalús* like "Willie Baby" for his provocatively titled *El Malo* (The Bad One) album.

The real gangster, though, was Bataan. Born to a Filipino father and a black mother, Bataan passed for Puerto Rican in East Harlem—so much so that he led the Nuyorican street gang the Dragons in the early '60s. Bataan was a respected street fighter whose short jail stints persuaded him to seek a more productive form of expression.

This complex cross-cultural heritage seeped into his music; his first major hit came in 1967 with a *bugalú* cover of the Impressions' "Gypsy Woman," a song originally influenced by Curtis Mayfield's interest in Latin rhythms. Bataan borrowed more than just Mayfield's song—unlike other *bugalú* vocalists with their showy, belting voices, Bataan preferred the sweet, soulful touch of Mayfield and the Impressions, Lymon and the Teenagers, and other sensitive soul men. Bataan was a gifted arranger and bandleader, but his greatest mark came in how he drizzled his richly emotive voice over his band's chattering Afro-Cuban rhythms.

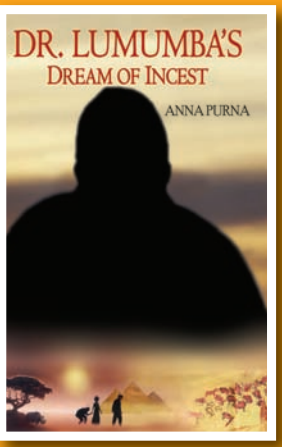
The *bugalú* formula itself was consistent. Simplicity was central. The catchiest *bugalús* kept the core rhythm uncluttered—a simple bass line or piano riff would suffice—with some blaring brass on top and rollicking percussion beneath. Unlike their older Latin forebears, who sang in Spanish, Nuyorican songwriters penned their catchy hooks in English. These choices endeared *bugalús* to a large cross-cultural audience and made them exportable. By 1967 and '68, bands from Puerto Rico to Panama, Colombia to Peru, expanded *bugalú*'s popularity across the Latin Caribbean and South America. "Black" and "brown" musical styles had been in conversation for years, from the Cuban clave rhythm powering the famed "Bo Diddley beat" to Perez Prado's mambo-fying of Hank Ballard's "The Twist." But the *bugalú* existed at the busiest of these crossings, the cross-pollination of disparate strands of African musical traditions in the New World that the slave trade had previously thrown asunder. Few American-born Latin music styles had ever had such an impact abroad.

Yet even as *bugalú* created new fans, it was attracting enemies as well. New York's Latin music machine was run through the loose collusion of record labels, club promoters and radio programmers. Traditionally, they had been able to use their muscle to force bands into deals that maximized profits for the owners but stiffed the players. When *bugalú* bands threatened to unite against this oligarchy, they found themselves blacklisted from radio play and ballroom bookings.

Meanwhile, *bugalú* had left former mambo giants like Tito Puente and Charlie Palmieri on the sidelines, overshadowed by the popularity of their younger peers. The *bugalú* blacklist emboldened these elders to reclaim the dance halls and record charts with the blessing of a Latin music industry happy to have more familiar faces to work with. The strength of the backlash was great enough that, by 1969, the once flourishing music was floundering. In the words of Bataan, "They assassinated the *bugalú*."

The main power identified with the blacklist was Fania Records. When attorney Jerry Masucci and bandleader Johnny Pacheco founded Fania in 1964, they were in the shadow of older Latin labels such as Tico, Alegre and Cotique. But *bugalú* acts such as Bataan, Bobby Valentin and Monguito Santamaria helped Fania catch their rivals. By the end of the '60s, Fania was well on its way to eclipsing all other American Latin labels.

Eager as Fania had been to capitalize on the *bugalú* craze, it was also quick to join the blacklist once its artists started asking for more money and control. The suppression was complete once salsa became the next major Latin movement out of New York in the early '70s. Salsa, with styles based around more traditional Latin rhythms than *bugalú*'s



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cross-cultural fusion, proved to be even more successful, and labels like Fania found it easy to abandon the *bugalú*.

Even though *bugalú* vanished from mainstream view and its records went out of print by the early '70s, the music maintained a cult following for decades. Bootlegs and compilations have kept many songs in rotation. More recently, Fania has led an unprecedented revival. When the Emusica Entertainment Group bought Fania's catalog in 2005 (for a reputed $10 million), it astutely perceived a continuing market for the music. It has since re-released many of Fania's *bugalú*-era albums—most for the first time on CD. Emusica has also commissioned tastemaker DJs like London's influential Gilles Peterson and New York newcomer DJ Rumor to assemble album-length Latin soul mixes in an attempt to introduce the music to a new generation.

Bugalú was always a great bridge between communities; in its heyday, ballrooms would draw black, white and Latino fans from across New York's boroughs to boogaloo the night away. With an equally diverse fan base in this emergent generation, *bugalú* continues to live up to the cross-cultural ideal it was born out of. That sentiment of unity is brought home on one of the new Fania anthologies, *Latin Soul Man*, dedicated to the late, great percussionist Ray Barretto. A Nuyorican from an older generation, he was an undisputed forefather of the *bugalú*. However, unlike his scornful peers, Barretto embraced the style; he even titled his 1967 album *Latino Con Soul*. The title track of another LP, *Together* (1969), appears on *Latin Soul Man*. On it, Barretto expresses the social idealism of the *bugalú* era, singing, "I know a beautiful truth and it's helped me be free/I know I'm black and I'm white and I'm red/The blood of mankind flows in me." ■

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Puzzle No. 3112

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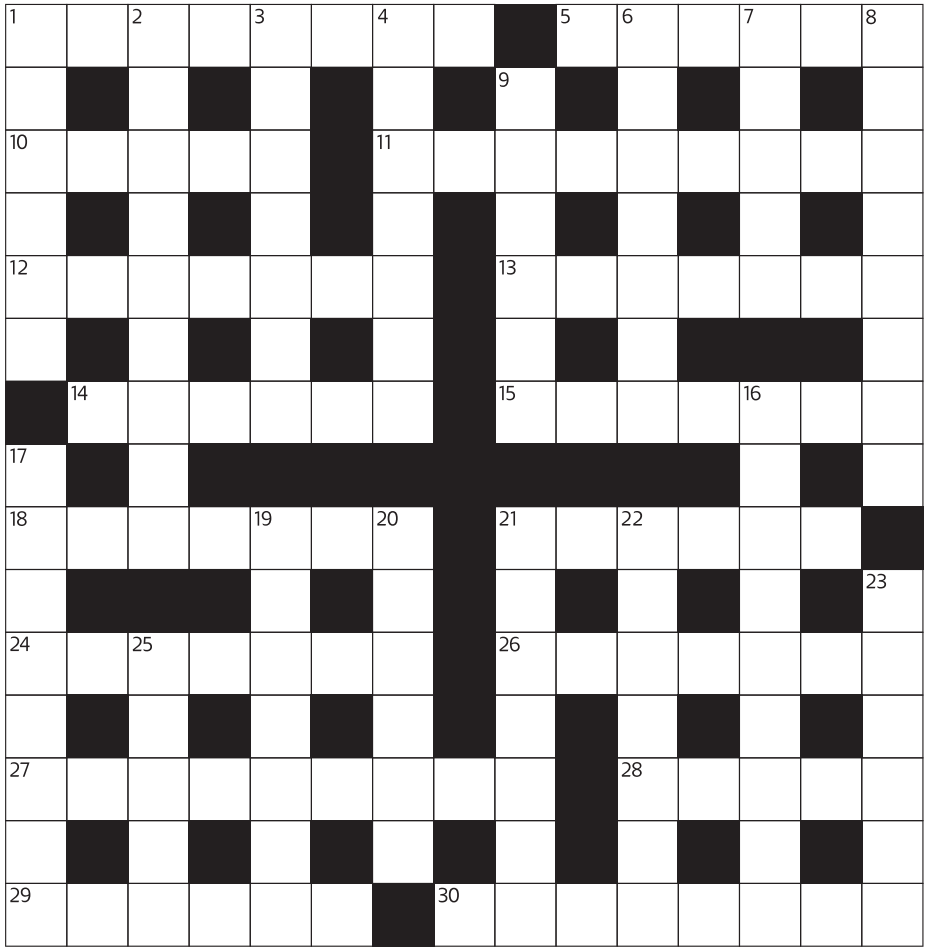

ACROSS

1 There's nothing in the boxes but funny pictures! (8)

5 See 1 down

10 What's the point to being tardy? It's a way to make someone happy! (5)

11 One from Tennessee didn't have to be asked to join. (9)

12 This type of motor has a sweep in a sort of bind. (7)

13 Not always as rapid as sometimes advertised when trains get wrecked at the junction. (7)

14 One of the things that'll get you if you don't watch out. Look—you'll go blind! (6)

15 A letter from Athens that makes one slip. (7)

18 How one might look when annoyed, to query the cane output. (7)

21 They produce groans as well as more pleasant sounds. (6)

24 Not talking a lot, being from the old country. (7)

26 Very backward in Spain ends in scattered frost, but it's better tasting, commonly. (7)

27 Having trouble where to find a noodle, perhaps. (2,3,4)

28 Full of activity, which one might expect from the hive. (5)

29 Open-mouthed because the corny joke is about a sticker. (6)

30 Was holding punctured tires, but might be expected to take orders from you. (8)

DOWN

1 and **5** across Pay late, and you might not get a good one. (6,6)

2 It might stop you on the highway, being sort of broad with that which should hold things safely. (9)

3 In a complete way it seems to be a singular type of working garb. (7)

4 One from Reno goes through northeastern Virginia, to Daniel, shortly. (7)

6 Yearbooks with examples of certain flowers? (7)

7 Thoughts tossed aside, obviously. (5)

8 Moving about a fixed point with an extremely gray appraisal. (8)

9 Less than first-rate, but rather supple, like a playful spirit. (6)

16 Marking the positions east or west, far from short when one plays a duet out of tune. (9)

17 Forming an arched structure, or just using a pole to get over? (8)

19 Little Nancy is rather sharp, which is material. (7)

20 A couple of points to brag about, in the hands of a third person. (6)

21 Capital for Washington! (7)

22 Isn't G.M. nasty, nasty—like one responsible for such wild contortions! (7)

23 Cracks, on the surface, could be fads. (6)

25 What a joker! It's all chopped to pieces, if you do. (3-2)

PUZZLED? No more cross words! See www.thenation.com/about/crossword.mhtml.

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3111

S	A	P	S	U	C	K	E	R	■	H	O	P	E	D
C	■	H	■	B	■	E	■	O	■	E	■	R	■	A
R	E	A	D	I	L	Y	■	O	R	A	T	O	R	Y
A	■	E	■	Q	■	B	■	K	■	P	■	S	■	D
P	U	T	■	U	T	O	P	I	A	■	U	P	O	R
■	■	O	■	I	■	A	■	E	■	T	■	E	■	E
P	U	N	C	T	U	R	E	■	C	H	O	R	E	A
O	■	■	■	O	■	D	■	B	■	I	■	■	■	M
S	H	U	T	U	P	■	S	E	A	R	C	H	E	S
T	■	N	■	S	■	C	■	S	■	T	■	E	■	■
H	A	R	P	■	L	O	A	T	H	E	■	A	R	C
A	■	E	■	P	■	B	■	O	■	E	■	R	■	A
S	W	A	L	L	O	W	■	W	I	N	D	S	O	R
T	■	D	■	O	■	E	■	E	■	T	■	E	■	D
E	G	Y	P	T	■	B	U	D	D	H	I	S	T	S

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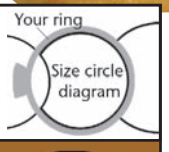

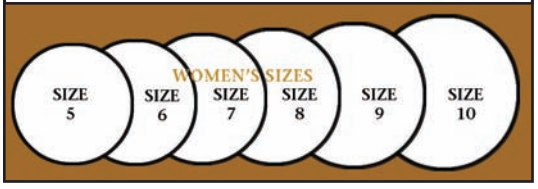

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